

Bhagavad Gita



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BOOKS



OF THE
BHAGAVAD GITA
IN ENGLISH RHYME

Edited with Introduction and Notes

BY

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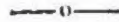
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CONTENTS.



	Page.
A brief sketch of the	
Translator's life	i
Introduction	xxxiv
Book I.—The Dejection of Arjun	2
Book II.—On Wisdom	13
Book III.—On Action	34
Book IV.—On Resignation	46
Book V.—On Renouncement	57
Book VI.—On Contemplation	65
Book VII.—On Direct Perception	77
Book VIII.—On God, the Saviour	87
Book IX.—On Mysterious Communion	95
Book X.—On Lordliness	104
Book XI.—The Vision of the Cosmic Form	116
Book XII.—On Devotion	129
Book XIII.—On Nature and the Person	135
Book XIV.—The Virtues	144
Book XV.—On the Best Person	152
Book XVI.—Godly and Demoniac Qualities	158
Book XVII.—On Inclinations	165
Book XVIII.—On Deliverance	173

A BRIEF SKETCH
OF
THE LIFE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

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permission of the proprietor Babu Kally Prosonno Dey.)*

RAI BIRESVAR CHAKRAVARTI BAHÁDOOR.

In devoting a few pages of our Magazine for reviewing the eventful life of the distinguished gentleman whose name appears above, we are not following the present journalistic craze for biographical notices of a novel character. We are not admirers of those literary hawkers who make it their business to record the minutest details of the life of every individual diverging appreciably from mediocrity; and in conferring the distinction of a published record we always carry in mind the wholesome principle that is seeking to do justice to one, we should not do injustice to a thousand. Indeed, any one who has even a cursory knowledge of Indian literature in all its branches, will at once admit that the genius of Indian writers flows in a direction other than that of biography. And it is nothing short of a strong feeling of duty—duty to ourselves, duty to our countrymen and duty to the future historians of our country—that leads us today, out of our ordinary way, to study the life of a contemporary who has only recently left us for ever.

· We know that the task is difficult and it is with considerable diffidence that we undertake it. It is like painting the portrait of one who never gave a sitting; the subject of our study was too

modest and too much engrossed in his work to leave anything like a connected history of his career. But still we cannot deny that we have had some facilities. We knew him from the administration of Sir Stenart Bayley. We had the good fortune of securing his kind patronage and abiding interest in the progress of this little journal. And as from the beginning of our acquaintance we felt that his character was one which the country could ill afford to lose, we availed ourselves of every opportunity that presented itself, in public or in private, of taking notes which we consider it a proud though melancholy privilege to utilize today for the benefit of our country.

Example is better than precept and no nation has ever risen from fallen state without some living models to mould and inspire the national character. If our country is ever to rise from the present state of intellectual and moral depression, if we are ever to become free from the just reproach of being a nation of talkers—of the proverbial empty vessels—we must have some really solid and unselfish workers in flesh and blood after the example of whose character we can shape our own. Half-forgotten historical personages, fished out of oblivion by the diligence of research cannot secure this object. We want real persons, living before us; fighting their battles and laying down their lives before our eyes. And it is for this reason that we consider studies like the present, valuable to all thoughtful men, invaluable to the rising generations of India.

The subject of the present memoir, Rái Biresvar Chakravarti Báhádóor, was descended from a family which is associated with the names of many learned *pandits* and with the memories of many remarkable incidents and anecdotes. It belongs to the *Dákshinátya* or southern sect of the *Vaidic* class of Bengali Bráhmans and is included in the *gotra* of the sage Kasyapa mentioned in the Vedas. The earliest known scion of the family was Gopijan Ballava Misra who lived in the seventeenth century A.D., and is said to have migrated from the south east into the village of *Goái* near *Milki* in the district of Hughly. His descendant Parasurám, surnamed *Vidyábhushān* for the vastness of his learning, was persuaded by some rich Zemindar of Chandernagore to establish a *Chatusthāthi*

{ free Sanskrit boarding college) in that town ; and the spot where he settled can still be seen near the bank of the Hughly, marked with giant trees and deserted temples and ruins of modest but extensive buildings which sheltered the numerous students of Parasurám—who as is usually the case, were not only taught but were also fed and clothed free—and the host of dependent Bráhmans that flocked round him. The whole neighbourhood derives its popular name *Vidyábhushaner dāngá* or compound of Vidyábhushan, from this illustrious settler and the people of the locality at the present day, seven or eight generations afterwards, still make the customary donations in honour of Parasurám's *chatuspáthís* and temples on occasions of marriages and *sráddhas*.

Parasurám's son Nilkantha titled *Sárba-bhauma* i.e., of universal knowledge was also a learned *pandit* and professor of great renown but his fame was eclipsed by that of his son, the great Bhabáni Charan, who is still looked upon by his descendants as the brightest gem and glory of the line. The brilliance of his intellectual attainments and the loftiness of his moral nature, his strong religious faith and severe austerities secured him the respect and admiration of all with whom he came into contact and earned for him the surname of *Panchánana* or five-faced, an appellation of the God Siva himself. One proof of the over-powering influence of the glowing virtues of this illustrious Bráhman is that his wife, like a true Hindu woman, followed him in death. The fascinating story of Siváni's glorious death on the funeral pile of her husband Bhabáni Charan, is still repeated and listened to with veneration and awe by many persons in and about British Chandernagore. The calm and unshakable resolution of the widow, the remonstrances of the older relatives who tried their best to dissuade her, the piteous cries of the helpless sons and daughters who shuddered at the thought of losing their mother along with their father, the preliminary ordeal of holding a finger in the flame which she passed through without a single twitching of the face to prove the strength of her nerves, the triumphant march towards the corpse on the river side in the new robes of a wife, and the clear and distinct uttering of the name of *Káli* even from amidst the flame, which ceased only with the last beat of life itself ;—these indeed make up a story

which cannot but move the most prosaic heart and exert a most ennobling and elevating influence on all.

The name of Bhabáni's son was Rámi Mohan and Rám Mohan's sons were Loknáth and A'nanda. Loknáth followed in the footsteps of his forefathers and became a professor of Hindu law with the distinguished title of Nyáyaratna. He was also very learned in the *Puránas* and in the *Srimadbhágavat*, *Bhagavadgítá* and Vedántic philosophy and many a scholar was found to flock round him to learn these abstruse subjects. But the many-sided genius of A'nanda struck out a new path for itself and instead of devoting himself entirely to the study of Sanskrit he began the study also of Persian and English and in time acquired a fair knowledge of these languages. Himself a most ardent follower of the higher forms of the *Táंत्रic* cult and a most devoted worshipper of *Sakti* according to the rites of the Hindu religion, A'nanda had a degree of toleration for the religious views of others which was remarkable, if not unique, in a man of his time. He freely read the Mahomedan and Christian religious books, not to mention those of the various conflicting sects of Hinduism and expressed his view that there was goodness and truth in them all if men could only lay aside their prejudices and grasp the real principles. After having read the Bible he once expressed his regret that Christ never visited India. "Our people are mad for religious light" he observed "and many a lesser soul than Christ has become object of our worship. If Christ had preached his gospels in India he would undoubtedly have become a very prominent figure in the *Sinhásana* of our temples—where we keep the cherished emblems of those whom we worship in our hearts." It will not be out of place to mention here that although a staunch follower of the *Devi*, A'nanda was a perfect *Pasváchári* and never touched any flesh meat, fish, intoxicating drinks or drugs or even tobacco in any shape according to the fashion of the *Viráchári* or *Kaula Táंत्रics*. He never in his life partook of any confectionery (*mistánná*) prepared by a non-Bráhman caste nor allowed any body in his family, more specially his only son Biresvar, to indulge in those, according to his ideas forbidden, delicacies. He married the daughter of Káli Prasád Chakravarti of the neighbouring village of Haridrádángá by name A'dyá Sakti and when he had

attained the rather advanced age of 38 years his only son Biresvar was born at British Chandernagore in a lowly room in Vidyābhushaner Dāngā on the night of *Vārūni*, 11th March 1841.

Old men are still alive who relate with wonder and veneration the almost incredible austerities which A'nanda underwent for pleasing the Devi so that She might grant him a son, for a man without a male offspring is according to Hindu ideas most unfortunate and dies with the debt due to his ancestors unrepaid by him. He worshipped the Devi every new moon with all the ceremonies which ordinary Hindus observe only once a year; he sat for hours repeating Vedic hymns and sacred verses in honour of the Deity; and many were the occasions on which he was seen to take his seat for worship with the rising sun and to leave it long after he had set—remaining the whole day absorbed in contemplation without taking any food or drink or stirring from his seat. He performed the sacred rite of *Chāndrāyana*—an extraordinarily difficult fasting feat lasting a month—which begins with an absolute fast on a new moon, allows one, two and so on up to 15 morsels of food and sips of drink on the fifteen succeeding days upto the full moon, then again reduces the allowance in the same way for the next fifteen days and ends with a second total fast on the following new moon. By these and similar observances the pious Bráhmaṇ continued his incessant devotions to the Devi; and when at length the prospect of an offspring appeared in view his heart became full of gladness and he regarded the new born babe as a sacred and precious gift from the hands of the pleased goddess whom he had so devotedly worshipped all through life.

We hope to be excused for dealing with the character of A'nanda in some slight detail for it is necessary for the purposes of our study. Many qualities which adorned this simple Bráhmaṇ devotee on the bank of the Bhágirathee, animated the heart and guided the actions of the sympathetic official in the hills and forest lands of Chotánágpur. The religious toleration which showed itself in the father's unbiassed study of the theological literature of different creeds, developed in the son into that wide and amiable catholicism which secured for him the help of Christians, Mahomedans, Hindus and the devil worshipping aborigines alike, and led him to undertake the establish-

ment and encouragement with equal zeal of *maktabs* and *tols*, of English schools and Vernacular institutions. The austerities of the father were reflected in the simplicity of habits and disregard for physical comforts which enabled the son to tour continually for thirty years in inaccessible and inhospitable tracts under all sorts of disadvantageous circumstances. And the religious fervour of the steady devoted Śākta was certainly the source from which the ardent young worker unconsciously derived the firm faith in his mission which alone could support the unselfish and unremitting labours of a life time.

From his birth to the ninth year Biresvar's life was uneventful. He grew up as a member of a large and orthodox joint Hindu family. His father A'nanda was during the son's infancy a ministerial officer in the court of the Sadr A'lā of Twenty-four Perganās and his modest income in those days of cheap living kept the family in fairly affluent circumstances. It was early decided that Biresvar should have an English education along with the usual course of Sanskrit training; and therefore after leaving the subjects usually taught in a village *pāṭhshālā* and acquiring a knowledge of the rudiments of Sanskrit Grammar and literature, he entered the Free Church Institution at Chinsurah at the age of ten. After studying up to a standard much higher than the Junior scholarship course in that institution under learned professors like Dr. Mackay, Mr. J. Beaumont, Dr. W. C. Fyfe and the Revd. Mr. Miller, he entered the Hughly College in the year of the sepoy mutiny and completed his studies there under such distinguished scholars as Professors J. Graves, R. Thwaytes, E. C. Bauerji &c. The subjects he most delighted in were literature, history, theology and the natural sciences; and many were the hours he spent in the nooks of the College Library pouring over his favourite authors* and acquiring that habit of thorough and careful reading which lasted all through life. Of light literature he read very little and he never read anything without going to the very bottom of the thoughts of the author he was studying. It was his habit to make marginal notes in pencil in every work he read which however, he took care to rub off in the case of borrowed books before returning the works to their owners. In one case it happened that some notes on the margin of a book were not rubbed off through oversight; and the

owner of the book, a Barrister-at-law and a luminary in an important bar found those notes so valuable that he much regretted that the majority of them had been rubbed off

In 1852 when Biresvar was twelve years of age his father died and then began a period of struggle lasting for some years which, if it brought to him much hardship, suffering and privation, was also the school where he learnt the lesson of worldly wisdom and experience. But for the help of his maternal uncle, Rám Chandra Chakravarti, the eldest son of Káli Prasád, it would have been difficult for Biresvar to have stood this current of adversity. A'dyá Sakti also displayed remarkable strength and fortitude at this stage and it was mainly due to her affectionate encouragement and help that Biresvar in the end successfully emerged from this period of struggle in his life.

Those alone who are aware of the forces and influences which work in the innermost recesses of a Hindu family will understand Biresvar's position and appreciate his difficulties during the period of struggle referred to above. His father had earned and saved money in his time ; but like a dutiful Hindu he had made over every pice of his savings to his parents. So when in the last years of his life he fell sick, he was absolutely without any means of supporting himself and his family. Misfortune never comes alone and in Biresvar's case the loss of a virtuous and affectionate father was accompanied by the pangs of poverty and the despair arising from utter destitution. A'dyá Sakti had therefore to take shelter in her brother's house at Haridrādāngá and the condition of a helpless Hindu widow dependent on a brother, overshadowed by a termagant wife, can be better imagined than described. Reproaches and taunts—frequently for no conceivable fault—became the portion of the mother and son ; they were constantly reminded of their dependence and invidious and galling distinctions were made in every little matter of food and drink, of dress and bedding between Biresvar on one hand and his cousins on the other. "Would you become a Magistrate?" Some one would sarcastically ask when Biresvar begged a rupee for paying his college fees. And the future civilizer of Chotánágpur several times very narrowly escaped being apprenticed as a salesman in a retail cloth shop in Chinsurah for

his temerity in asking his uncle to purchase some books for him. But A'dyá Sakti did not break down under these trials. She bore them patiently. Now by selling an utensil out of her poor stock and then by disposing of a small piece of jewellery worth more than its weight in sentiment, sometimes by borrowing on promise to repay when her son should be able to earn and at others by coaxing the brother and the sister-in-law by words and by service—the pious lady persevered in steadily providing her son with the necessities of education.

However that may be, Biresvar never forgot afterwards that it was his uncle who sheltered him when he was helpless and his gratitude towards Rám Chandra knew no bounds. He was a constant attendant at the bedside of the poor old man in his last days; and when the uneducated and ignorant cloth retailer died on his lap, the father of education in a Province wept like a little child beside the corpse on the sacred bank of the Bhágirathée. The sons of Rám Chandra had always a true friend and supporter in Biresvar and he made numerous attempts to settle some of them in life.

In 1859, Biresvar had to leave college and seek employment. After having served for a short time as second master of an aided High English School in the Hughly District he first entered the service of government as an assistant master in the Barrackpur Governor General's school, as the present Government school was then called, in September 1860. From Barrackpur, Biresvar was sent to Gopináthpur, Balasore and Midnápur in which last—one of the biggest Zila schools in Bengal—he was second and subsequently officiating head master. From Midnápur he was sent in April 1867 as Deputy Inspector to Chotánágpur which was the scene of his labours for the next thirty years. In all the schools he worked in, Biresvar left the unmistakable marks of a born school master and thorough disciplinarian. Thus to mention a single instance, the Gopináthpur school was quite an insignificant institution when Biresvar took charge of it. But the next year it occupied the second place in the University Entrance Examination under Biresvar's skilful management and efficient teaching.

It was Rái Báhádoor Biresvar's work in Chotánágpur which was the special work of his life. It was not an Inspector's work—it

was the work of civilizing a large tract of the country, twenty-six thousand square miles in area, peopled by numerous aboriginal peoples besides a large number of backward Hindus, Mahomedans and Semi-Hinduised tribes. He was now in his element and threw his whole heart into the work. He regarded himself as the instrument through which it was the will of God to deliver His creatures in the inaccessible hills and jungles of Chotánágpur, from the darkest depths of ignorance, superstition and barbarism. Whoever worked or sympathised in the same cause—whether the Christian Missionary, the native Raja, the aboriginal *mánki* (headman), or the European official was the Rai Báhádoor's best friend and constant companion. A short history of this unique work by a single individual—unparalleled we say with confidence in the annals of educational labour in this country, official or otherwise—cannot but be interesting and instructive.

On his first arrival in the field of his future work Biresvar found that though appointed as an *Inspector* he had yet scarcely any schools under him to inspect. There could indeed be very little of ordinary inspection duty in a place where only 16 schools—8 of which were primary institutions of the lowest order, under the Berlin and Anglican missions—lay scattered over a rough and hilly tract of about 26,000 square miles, inaccessible in some parts and populated to a very considerable extent by the most backward though highly interesting aboriginal tribes of the Kolarian and Dravidian stocks. He at once realised the fact that his work was to be of an uphill and special character—it was in short to be one of *construction* rather than of mere supervision. He felt that the heavy and highly onerous duty which devolved upon him was to consist in organizing a complete and effective system of education for civilizing the hundreds of thousands of human beings in a barbarous or semi-barbarous state, who inhabited the yet untried field entrusted to his charge. He had accordingly from the very beginning of his service in Chotánágpur to propose and mature various original schemes suitable to the tract and after their sanction by Government to work them out and carefully note the results. It is gratifying to find that most of these schemes, if not all, proved successful. For, in less than a quarter of a century the extremely backward tribes of Chotánágpur

who were once so dreadfully averse to all ideas of education and reform gradually became civilized and began freely to avail themselves of the means of obtaining primary and secondary education now thrown open to them by Government in all parts of the country.

It has been stated above that when Bīrosvār took over charge of the Division in 1867 there were only 16 schools in all within its boundaries. On the other hand when he made over charge to his successor thirty years later, there were very nearly *three thousand* educational institutions of all classes within the same area. This undoubtedly shews that education was during these thirty years introduced, developed and popularized amongst the aboriginal tribes of Chotānāgpur to an extent which its best friends could wish for. It was by no means an easy task to commence educational operations amongst a class of people who, like the aboriginal tribes of Chotānāgpur, had for hundreds of years remained steeped in the darkest ignorance and superstition. But the Rāi Bāhādoor was fully equal to the magnitude of the task imposed upon him. For a long series of years he had to go from village to village—the most arduous undertaking in a hilly and unopened tract like Chotānāgpur which ultimately broke down his splendid *physique* and compelled him to retire from Government service about two years before the usual full term of extension expired—living and mixing freely with the people as one of them, slowly but steadily impressing on them the value of acquiring knowledge and continually preaching the cause of education and reform to their absolutely uncultivated minds.

Imagine a small village on a hill side in the midst of a forest, consisting of a few huts and cultivated fields cut off on all sides from the rest of the world. It is morning and the half-naked swarthy inhabitants are following their usual occupations. Some are working in their fields, others are looking after the cattle, some women here are picking *Mahud* flowers to appease their hunger and a few hoary headed elders are perhaps assembled there under a big tree to sacrifice a cock to the wicked *bongd* or devil who in the form of a tiger is committing depredations every night in and about the village. Suddenly there appears on the skirts of the village a *patunguin* followed by one or two *bāngiwāllās* (porters)—a sight not usual with the villagers and not likely to increase the balance and peace

of their uncultured minds. Their worst suspicions are roused—it must mean a fresh burden of taxation on them, a new sort of interference with their quiet and happy life. The men and women run away from both sides as the *palanquin* advances, half in shyness, and half in suspicion and fear. The occupier of the *palanquin* notices all this with great care and concern and comes out perhaps only in his homely *dhoti* and slippers. He proceeds on foot and alone to the comparatively bigger hut of the village headman leaving his bearers and servants to rest at a distance under a big *Sál* or *Peepul*. He finds the headman sitting in a charpoy, perhaps supervising the preparation of *Hándia* or *Pacháo* (an intoxicating food prepared from rice) by the members of his family for the next dance or festival; he walks up to him in perfect confidence and accosts him in clear accents of his native dialect. The *Mánki* is a bit surprised—he never heard before such perfect accent of Mundári from a *dikoo* (foreigner). He half suspiciously welcomes the stranger and asks the object of his visit. But the stranger first takes care to become perfectly familiar with the headman by a hearty and free conversation on domestic and general topics. Gradually the subject of education and reform is introduced—of course with the greatest caution and with the most scrupulous regard to the conservatism and beliefs of his hearer. By and by a few of the villagers join the party and take part in the friendly conversation; perhaps by midday Biresvar finds himself lecturing in fluent Mundári or Ho or Sántáli to a pretty big audience of half-naked aboriginal villagers; and if fortune favoured him, the establishment of a *páthshálá* in the village is agreed upon before the sun sets and the evening finds the Inspector's peon carrying a letter to the nearest post office—if there is one within a reasonable distance—instructing the staff at head quarters to arrange at once for a *páthshálá* for children and a night school for working adults in the village in question.

But all conquests were not so easy. More frequently than not the most fantastic but at the same time resolute objections were raised by the ignorant and suspicious villagers, in dealing with whom one had to exercise the greatest tact and caution. "What is that to you?" some *mánki* would ask with wonder, unable to understand

by his mind, utterly foreign to ideas of unselfishness or philanthropy, why one should come from a distance and offer to labour and render assistance solely for their good. "It is a devise to make us all christians and give up the worship of the great *Bongá* of the fig-tree" some clever villager would suggest and how could a stranger convince a sceptic multitude that direct interference with their religious faith was furthest from his intention? On one occasion when Biresvar was persuading an influential villager to send his son to school in order that others might follow his example, the old man looked up to his face and pathetically said "Sir, I have already given one son to the sircár; I am getting old and have only one more son to look after my fields and my cattle. I shall be ruined if the sircár takes him too." By saying that he had given a son to sircár or government, the villager referred to the fact that he had allowed the son to be educated, for the elder boy had then made considerable progress in education and was pursuing his studies in the High English School at Ránci away from his father's home!

Such was the inner mechanism of the agency by which during the period of Rái Báhádoor's service in Chotánágpur the educational status of the five districts of the division rapidly rose from that of an area entirely devoid of all intellectual culture to the level of an average district of Bengal or Behár—tracts which are peopled by men of aryan extraction, amongst whom education in some shape or other is known to have existed for hundreds of years. The Rái Báhádoor himself in his extreme modesty, never claimed that all this marvellous progress in the education and progress of Chotánágpur was the exclusive work of his unaided hand. But those who know him and his work—synonymous with the history of education and civilization in Chotánágpur during the 30 years from 1867 to 1897—will at once agree that but for a worker of the stamp of Biresvar, Chotánágpur would have been nowhere near the position it occupies at the present day. There is, of course, no instance in the whole range of history in which the work of educating and civilizing a province has been carried out by one individual; but never did an individual's name better deserve than in the present case to be indissolubly united with the sacred and gigantic work of

redeeming a vast population. The following unimpeachable testimonies of high officials, who were certainly not over-anxious to magnify the magnitude of a Bengali Babu's work, will shew to an unbiassed mind the prominent share which Biresvar had in the work of spreading education and civilization amongst the backward races of Chotánágpur.

Colonel Hungerford Boddam, Deputy Commissioner of Házáribágh and at times officiating Commissioner and Judicial Commissioner of Chotánágpur in the course of a letter written to the Rái Báhádoor just before leaving the country on retirement said: "It is entirely owing to the hearty manner in which you have exerted yourself that education (which when you first came into the district was at its very lowest ebb) has advanced until the district has been very nearly covered with Vernacular and English schools."

The Right Revd. J. C. Whitley, Bishop of Chotánágpur wrote in 1897 to the Rái Báhádoor after the latter's retirement. "I came to Chotánágpur in 1869 but you preceded me by two years. You have indeed been instrumental in bringing about a very great advance in the education of this district and it must give you much pleasure to look back on the changes for the better which have, from time to time, taken place.

"I thoroughly recognise your interest in the cause of education among the backward races by whom we are surrounded in Chotánágpur and take this opportunity of thanking you for the support and encouragement which you have for so many years afforded to the schools connected with our Christian missions."

The Hon'ble W. H. Grimley B. A., I. O. S., late Commissioner of Chotánágpur and Senior Member of the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces wrote in a letter to the Rái Báhádoor: "Your work as an Inspector was very highly appreciated by me when I was commissioner of Chotánágpur from 1889 to 1896. I travelled about a great deal in that extensive country and in the course of my tours came across abundant traces of your industry, intelligence and zeal in the cause of education—more specially in the large number of primary schools which owed their origin to your exertions. When you first went to Chotánágpur in 1867, elementary education was unknown in the villages, but now there is scarcely a village of

average size in which some few persons cannot read, write and understand the Hindi language. I used to read your annual reports on the progress of education with much interest and I consider that the title of "Rái Báhádoor" which has been recently conferred upon you was never better deserved. When you first joined the division there were I believe not more than twenty educational institutions in the country; when you left it the number of schools of all classes was about three thousand. What better evidence could there be than this of your interest in promoting education among the aboriginal races of Chotánágpur?"

The following certificate was awarded to Rái Biresvar Chakravarti Báhádoor on the occasion of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria's assumption of the Imperial title in 1877:—

By command of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General this certificate is presented in the name of Her most Gracious Majesty Victoria Empress of India, to Babu Biresvar Chakravarti son of A'nanda Chandra Chakravarti in recognition of his eminent services in the cause of education.

1st January 1877.

Sd. RICHARD TEMPLE.

The above testimonials have been quoted amongst a large number only to shew that Rái Báhádoor Biresvar had a very large share in the work of civilizing Chotánágpur by the spread of education among its population—a larger share than can be claimed by any other single individual. One can clearly remember that even so late as twenty years ago half-naked savages called "*Dhángars*" with wooden combs stuck in their long hair used to visit the towns in lower Bengal and offer to do dirty work such as clearing cess-pools and the like for a small remuneration. Has any one considered why we do not see them now? The reason is that they have now been civilized and if at the present day you visit the places whence they used to come, you will find that the *Dhángars* have put on proper clothing, have thrown aside their wooden combs and are doing the same sort of work which their Hindu and Mahommedan neighbours do. Many of them have acquired a knowledge of reading and writing and are following occupations requiring such knowledge. Surely the services of a man are extraordinary when he has a considerable share in effecting such a transformation in the

bulk of the population of twenty-six thousand square miles ; and such are the services of Rái Biresvar Chakravarti Báhádóor to his country !

On the 15th December 1896 after 36 years of honest, patient and highly successful work, the Rái Báhádóor retired from the service of Government. He travelled a good deal in various parts of India after his retirement but generally lived as a recluse at Giridih in the District of Házáribágh. Those who visited Giridih during his stay there must have noticed the neat little "Adyánanda Cottage" the gates of which were ever open to all ; and many a friend and many a stranger used to visit the place to see the venerable old man and hear his earnest and deeply instructive conversation which was seldom on any subject other than after-life, spirit, God-head and communion.

Biresvar's success in the field of literature was also not of a mean order and it cannot but be regarded as a severe misfortune to the country that his career was cut short just at the time when his vast scholarship, his robust common sense, his wide experience and acute observation were beginning to bear fruit in this direction. He was admitted by the highest authorities of Behár and the North West to have been a writer of chaste and idiomatic Hindi and perhaps no other Bengali had the good fortune of securing such high praise from leading Hindi Journalists regarding the style of his Hindi as was accorded to Biresvar's advanced reader, the Sáhitya Sangraha—a considerable number of the prose pieces in which were from the compiler's own pen. "Biresvar Babu has taken on himself the work of educating Hindi speaking boys" wrote the Behár Bandhu in Hindj in its issue of 16th December 1886 "and has considered it to be his duty to acquire facility in writing correct Hindi. There is no doubt whatever that he has acquired complete mastery in that direction." The "Bhárat Jivan" a leading Hindi magazine of Benares reviewing the Sáhitya Sangraha in its issue of 10th January 1887 observed : "His book is sure to be an ornament in our schools." The Bhárat Mitra an ably conducted and influentially supported Hindi journal after praising the subject and style of the book recorded the following remarks in Hindi in its issue of 3rd March 1887 : "We beg to request with due deference

to our educational authorities that if they wish to effect the improvement of their department and want to benefit the pupils under their charge they should try to convey instruction through the medium of text books like this." The Hindi Pradip of Allahabad in concluding an appreciative review of the work said on 1st December 1886 : "Our pupils in these provinces also would derive great benefit if worthless works like the translation of Hunter's History and the worm eaten "*Gutka*" of a thousand years were set aside and this work used in their stead." Even in the distant Punjab this Hindi reader made its influence felt. "I have no doubt" wrote Mr. Náráin Dás M. A., Extra Assistant Commissioner, Sialkot, Punjab "that for us Punjabis amongst whom the study of Hindi is at a discount, your book will be of great use."

The Sáhitya Sangraha was not merely a Hindi reader for advanced students—it was a work which brought about a revolution in the style and nature of Hindi school literature. Pandit Kesav Rám Bhatt, a Hindi scholar of high acumen and considerable reputation and Editor of the Behár Bandhu wrote in a letter in 1886 :—

"As regards the prose portion of Sáhitya Sangraha it is a valuable addition to Hindi literature. I shall attempt to show in my Behár Bandhu how it surpasses the existing Hindi readers such as *Gutka* by Rájá Siva Prasád, Bhásá-bodhini by Rádhá Lal and Bhásá-śár by Rám Din Singh.

Sáhitya Sangraha is not merely a selection to be taught in schools, but it is a sort of comparative philology, showing how the Hindi literature, of course as far as merely prose is concerned, from the time of Lalluji author of the Prem Ságar up to this date has undergone vast and rapid changes."

The above passages will clearly shew to the reader unacquainted with Hindi what Rái Biresvar has done for improving the school literature of the oldest and most widely spoken vernacular of India. Of those who take an interest in Hindi and have watched its progress in late years, more specially in the department of juvenile and educational works, all must be aware of the beneficial influence exerted by the labours of the Rái Báhádoor. Thus Mr. G. A. Grierson I. C. S. the foremost authority in Indian vernacular languages

of the present day "read the *Sāhitya Sangraha* with much interest and certainly thought it to be one of the best Hindi reading books." The late Bābu Bhudev Mukerji C. I. E., himself an excellent Hindi scholar, with whom Biresvar was on intimate terms thus expressed himself on the subject in the course of a letter: "I have myself never been a purist and I know that you are not one. And indeed in the selections you have made one can easily see that you have not at all disregarded the merits of writers who are not purists. As regards your excellent book I think it ought to be and will be read extensively by both Hindu and Mahommedan pupils of the schools of Behār and the N. W. P. as also of your own division, Chotānāgpur.

The *Sāhitya Sangraha* was the text-book in Hindi of the Calcutta University Entrance Examination for a long series of years, during a part of which the jurisdiction of the University extended over the United Provinces, the Punjab and the Central Provinces besides the area under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. The Rāi Bāhādoor was also the author of some minor Hindi school books. He was the first to arrange and print the tables of native arithmetic taught in Hindi *Pāthshālās* and over a lac of copies of his *Ganit-gur* have been used by Hindi speaking students. His Bengali works on the lives of poet saints and on the history of the Kols, as well as his excellent sanitary primer the *Swāsthya Sādhan*, were for a long time among the favourite prize books in Bengali schools. We are moreover in a position to state that besides his published works, the Rāi Bāhādoor has left a mass of unpublished manuscripts some of which are extremely valuable and interesting. Amongst these are a complete translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in English rhyme and an incomplete treatise on *Mānava Prakṛiti* (Human nature) in Bengali and several Hindi works. His Bengali hymns—which he called *Kāngāl Dāsi* from his assumed name *Kāngāl Dās* or the beggar servant of the Lord—are very much liked by his friends and regarded as exquisite by such eminent authorities in such matters as the Revd. Bhāi Tryluccho Nāth Sānyāl, the Singing Apostle of the New Dispensation *Brāhmo Samāj*. In his monthly Magazine the *Naba Vidhāna* for the month of *Bhādra*, 1210 (Bengali year) the Reverend gentleman reviewed

the life of Biresvar in a long article which he concluded by reproducing two of the latter's latest songs composed a few days before his death, when perhaps the inner light in him had already perceived of the approaching dissolution.* We refrain from any attempt to translate these delicate pieces for it is impossible to maintain in a translation the homely beauty, the natural grace and the earnest sentiment of the original.

The Rái Báhádoor was a master hand in English writing—both official and literary—and his articles in the magazines and his annual reports year after year were read by the public and high officials with great interest. The Hon'ble Mr. Grimley as will be seen from his remarks speaks of Biresvar's reports in glowing terms. We select at random the following extract as a specimen of the Rái Báhádoor's English style. It is taken from the preface of his *Sāhitya Sangraha* which in fact is not a preface in the ordinary sense but a learned paper on the history and the gradual development of the Hindi language. Speaking of the range and power of the Hindi language the erudite author observes :—

“Derived as it is immediately from the Prākṛit, the popular form of Sanskrit spoken in old times, Hindi has very nearly an unlimited resource in the parent language. It can accordingly boast of a classical literature, more specially in the department of poetry, which in respect of sweetness, capacity and splendour stands unrivalled amongst all the living vernaculars of the east. He who has read the sublime poetry of Tulsidās, and realized the beauty of his thoughts, the happy elegance of his expression and the chaste and natural flow of his style, cannot but admit that if it were for this *one writer* alone, the language in which he has written would command the highest respect and admiration of all the literary world. But Tulsi is not the only star that has adorned our firmament—he is not the only bard that has sung in the Hindi language. Surdas, Kabir, Nanak, Kesav, Bibári, Gridhári, Lalluji, Gāng and a host of other equally able writers enriched the litera-

* A number of these songs have since appeared in the masterly article reviewing Biresvar's life and work published in the leading Bengali magazine *Nabya-Bharat* (issue of the month of *Jaistha*, Bengali year 1311).

ture of our country in the olden days. In modern times the number of our geniuses has undoubtedly fallen off, but the appearance of men like Hanuman and the illustrious Hariś Chandra in our own days, proves to the world that their language is not doomed and that there is enough of poetry and sweetness left even in the dry bones of dying India."

The above extract will perhaps help to make it clear to all, that there are not many Indian writers of English prose who can approach Biresvar's style. Well might Mr. F. S. Growse, I.C.S., Magistrate of Futehpur, a no mean judge of English style, go a little out of his way in reviewing the Hindi selection and observe: "The preface is very sensible and interesting and well-written and shews considerable mastery over the difficulties of English composition."

Amongst his various contributions to periodicals, we may mention the 'Lay of the Kol' a poetical composition in English written on the occasion of Sir Charles Elliott's visit to Chotánággpur which was published in the *Reis and Réyyet* several years ago and was much appreciated by its learned Editor, Dr. Sambhu Chandra Mukhopádhyaýa and by its readers. His Bengali ode on the death of his mother and his learned review of 'Ihakál Parakál' a philosophical work by Chiranjib Sarmá may be mentioned amongst his numerous contributions to Bengali periodical literature.

This is perhaps the place where mention should be made of the Rái Báhá loor's knowledge of many languages. He was familiar with the following tongues *viz*, Bengali, Sanskrit, English, Hindi, Uryá, Ho, Mundári and Sántáli. The last five languages he acquired by self-study and frequent intercourse with the various peoples in the midst of whom he had to live from time to time.

One of the main traits in Rái Báhádoor Biresvar's character was a missionary spirit which never allowed him to lose a suitable opportunity of imparting instruction to others. He was always impelled by an earnest desire to raise his fellow beings to his own level of intellectual and moral culture. He was a born instructor of men. He obtained the chance of appointment as Deputy Collector in 1867 and could also have very easily entered the judicial service if he liked. But with his firm fixedness of pur-

pose he gave up all these chances of more lucrative appointment as he found the work of education more congenial to him. He travelled much and visited every place of interest in India excepting those in the Bombay and Madras presidencies. He visited Burma and Oudh and spent about a year at Lucknow, mixing freely with the people there and acquiring a knowledge of that province of classical interest and Mahomedan greatness in constant company with his beloved friend Dr. Rām Lāl Chakravarti Rāi Bāhādoor. His religious views were broad and catholic and he was an ardent student and follower of Yog system of Hindu philosophy as expounded in the *Upanishads*. With a mind thoroughly cultured and stored with a vast amount of information drawn from an incredible variety of sources; of extraordinary conversational power and presence of mind which always made him the most prominent figure in a party towards whom all faces were turned; firm and energetic in hours of crisis but full of feelings and sentiments of almost feminine tenderness; Rāi Biresvar Chakravarti Bāhādoor was always surrounded by men who came to him for advice in time of danger, consolation in days of distress, help in time of need and fatherly care and sympathy in moments of dejection and despair.

Rāi Biresvar Chakravarti Bāhādoor was the head of a large family consisting of five sons, six daughters and numerous grand children. During his last days he lived among them the life of an unattached *grihastha* mixing with them and sympathising with their trials and sorrows without identifying himself with their worldly pursuits. His inner thoughts were centered on Brahman alone :

" As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm ;
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

We cannot conclude this brief and imperfect sketch without relating some incidents, which throw a flood of light on the real nature of the man. As the reader has already seen, Biresvar's father A'nanda was a person of great religious fervour and strong faith in divine goodness. It is said that if any man devotedly and earnestly uttered the single syllable *mā*—i. e., mother, by which

name *Sāktā* devotees address the goddess they adore—within his hearing, his heart would at once become full and tears would appear in his eyes. Holy men of this nature who feel so closely the divine presence are never over-mindful of what ordinary men say and think of their action. They are guided by their conscience and sense of duty—the sacred voice of God which they hear within them. In short such men have a regular principle of action and are thoroughly independent. They do what they hold to be right, thinking that they are carrying out the command of the Almighty and they do not care how the world interprets their action.

A few men of the generation about to be extinct may perhaps yet be found in and about British Chandernagore who can relate incidents shewing the many high virtues of A'nanda. For example they can say how one afternoon a respectable gentleman of Chandernagore, well advanced in years, appeared before A'nanda as he was sitting near his temple of worship and fell prostrate before him. The gentleman had been socially boycotted for some time through the influence of a far more powerful rival house and subjected to oppression and harassment by some of his castemen. That was the day of *Lakṣmī puja*—it was long past noon, but the old man could not find a Brāhman to worship the goddess in his place; and the result was that the whole family—men, women and children—were fasting, for not even a drop of water could be taken by any one till the worship had been done. Many Brāhman were of course willing to go and perform the ceremony, for the gentleman was in fairly affluent circumstances and could pay a handsome fee. But none dared for fear of incurring the displeasure of the head of the opposite party whose influence in the locality was unbounded. A'nanda heard the man's pitiable story—related with tears and sobs—in silent contemplation. His bright eyes dimmed, his heart melted. "Your wife and children shall not fast so long as I live" said the courageous Brāhman "Let—do to me what he can." And saying so he called one of the dependent Brāhman of the family and ordered him to go and do the worship at the gentleman's place. The worship was done; the gentleman who had sought his assistance, gradually regained his position in society. But A'nanda reaped the fruits of his courage and magnanimity in the bitter hostility of the most power-

ful Zemindár of the locality which entangled him in lawsuits lasting for years and caused him endless trouble, harassment and pecuniary loss. He never however repented the action he took for helping the oppressed and looked back on the day of the event with pride and satisfaction.

Born of such a father Biresvar had naturally a strongly religious turn of mind. It is said that in childhood his play consisted mainly in making siva emblems of clay and imitating the processes of worship. In his school, he became a great favourite with his Christian teachers of the Duff College for the keen interest he took in his Biblical and theological studies. When he was yet in his teens he first came into contact with the great Keshub Chunder whose fiery fervour and enthusiasm he keenly appreciated and whose glorious and triumphant career he foresaw. It was he who afterwards took Keshub Chunder and his party to Házáribágh. Biresvar was constantly with him and their acquaintance ripened into a close spiritual friendship.

An incident may here be mentioned which will shew how sincere and out-spoken Biresvar was and how this quality of his was appreciated by Keshub Chunder. One morning during the latter's stay at Házáribágh, Biresvar was sitting with him. Keshub had just finished a long article for the Sunday Mirror which was then edited by him and he handed over the manuscript to Biresvar asking him to read and express his opinion on it. The article was on some public question which had been the subject of newspaper agitation for some time past. Biresvar read the article carefully and then silently handed back the manuscript to the great orator. "Why are you silent?" the latter asked "Come on, be frank and outspoken in your verdict." Biresvar at once responded to the call. "The article is well written" he said "and contains much thoughtful matter, but I am of opinion that it betrays a little undue partiality towards the *Sáhebs*." Keshub was not prepared for such a charge. His face flushed; some feelings tended to rise in his heart which the saint successfully subdued. Then half in jest and half in reproach to his critic he observed "Yes, I am unduly partial to the *Sáhebs*. Perhaps, they will make me a Deputy Magistrate." "A Deputy Magistrateship is not the only thing which a

man may desire and the *Sáhebs* can give" came the retort quick as a flash of lightning. Before the speaker had time to understand fully what he had said and to blame his indiscretion, the words had reached Keshub's ears. His face grew crimson for an instant but the incident was then forgotten and friendly conversation on other topics was carried on which the usual enthusiasm, mirth and mutual good will.

Three or four years after this trifling incident Keshub delivered one of his most magnificent lectures in the Town Hall of Calcutta at which the Viceroy, the Lieutenant Governor and many other high officials and native princes and notables were present. Biresvar, who never lost an opportunity of treating himself with Keshub's inspired eloquence, was also there. After the lecture was over the most distinguished men in the audience were shaking hands and conversing with the hero of the evening. Biresvar was standing at a little distance and talking to some friends of his. Suddenly Keshub approached Biresvar, held him by the hand and drew him aside. "Your charge was not altogether groundless, Biresvar," he observed with considerable emotion "the seeds of truth lay in it though I did not perceive them at the time. The tendency to gain some advantage by leaning towards the *Sáhebs* did rise in me but I am glad that I have conquered it. You were quite right in thinking that there were things other than Deputy Magistrateships to wish for. Thanks for the advice you gave, which has done me much good." Before Biresvar had time to recover from the surprise and to gather what to say in reply, Keshub broke away and disappeared in the crowd.

Biresvar was known to a large circle of European officials many of whom had a high regard for him and invited him to mix freely in their society—a privilege not ordinarily extended by high-class Europeans to natives of India. Biresvar gladly accepted these opportunities but did not forget his caste rules in such company. He once went to pay a morning visit on business to a European official of high position with whom he had only a short acquaintance. After the business was finished they were conversing on a variety of subjects. In the mean time the official's tea was ready and was brought into the room. As usual, the official asked Biresvar to take a cup of tea if he had no objection.

"Thank you, I am not accustomed" replied Biresvar in the stereotyped fashion.

But the official would not let him escape so cheap. He wanted to study the man having perhaps heard of his worth from his predecessor in office. "Do take a cup, Biresvar Babu" he urged "I am sure it won't do you any harm." Then seeing some Hindu peons of his and one or two other visitors waiting in the Verandáh, the sly official asked in a low tone "Shall I shut the door?"

This was a rather hard hit and roused the veteran educationist. "Don't please do injustice" he exclaimed "to me and to yourself; I myself have no superstition and don't think that I shall be a whit the worse by drinking tea with you. But I shall consider myself entitled to that honour, only when I shall be in a position to do it openly. To take tea with you and then to deny the fact in my own society as if it were a sin would be to lower you and myself in a way which is as unnecessary as distasteful." The official admitted the force of his argument.

Biresvar worked with this fearless independence and outspokenness even while discharging his official duties. He was a most obedient and graceful subordinate but he never hesitated to state his opinions openly and forcibly however contrary they might be to those of his official superiors. At the same time he had due regard for the opinion of others. This was one of the reasons why he retired from service before the retirement of Sir Alfred Croft from the Directorship of the Department of Public Instruction in Bengal. "I must retire from the service" he wrote to the great and sympathetic official "at least three months before your own retirement." The official did not ask him the reason why, for with his deep insight into human nature he fully understood the meaning and sent a very kind and touching reply. When asked by a friend as to why he was retiring when he could still continue in service for about two years and had just been promoted, he said "I do not wish to enjoy the promotion at the risk of creating unpleasantness. Sir Alfred knows me and my work. He gives me a free hand in my Division. He treats me more as a friend than as a subordinate. How can I expect that his successors, without his knowledge and experience of Chotánágpur, will treat me in the same way? I have identified

myself so much with Chotánágpur that I cannot bear being overruled in anything concerning it. It hurts me. I had therefore better retire with Sir Alfred whose kindness and encouragement alone makes service with failing health a possibility and a pleasure to me."

Sir Alfred's high estimation of Bircsvar's character will be apparent from the following copy of a letter received by one of his sons after the Rái Báhádoor's death :—

"My dear——

I received two days ago your letter of the 5th June. The melancholy news that it conveyed of your father's death, I had already learnt from Babu Chandra Náth Basu who spoke of him in terms of high regard and sincere affection and who evidently felt his loss very deeply. Those sentiments, as I told him in reply I fully share. Your father was not only one of the most faithful servants that the Government had in the department of education but he was a man whose high character and unswerving rectitude tended to elevate the tone of all who were brought into contact with him. As a personal friend I valued him highly though the distance at which he lived and carried on his work was a bar to frequent meeting.

It is a satisfaction to me to believe that the high traditions which he has left will be fully maintained by yourself and I trust also by the other members of your family. I shall always be glad to hear of your welfare."

Brought up in the school of adversity in childhood, the Rái Báháloor was of extremely simple habits. His food and clothing were of the commonest kind. At times the members of his family would prepare for him rich food or make his clothing a bit costly. On such occasions he would address his sons in a sweet joking mood and observe "You may consider yourselves to be the sons of a rich man and do what you like. But I am a poor man's son and must live as such." And soon he would revert to his own simplicity. He could cook all sorts of Indian dishes excellently and took pleasure in occasionally demonstrating his proficiency in the arts of the kitchen. In his younger days he could walk very long distances without feeling fatigue. He used to say how, while out touring he would get

out of his *palanquin* and walk along with the bearers counting the mile posts one after another. In this way he would frequently walk ten or fifteen miles on a morning or afternoon over the hilly roads of Chotánágpur. All through his life he was an excellent sick-nurse and both in his own family and in those of his friends he frequently sat up night after night watching the sick and administering to their needs. An intelligent study of medical books coupled with a keen power of observation gave him such an insight into cases of common forms of illness, that medical men of considerable experience and education not unfrequently wanted to consult him and obtained benefit from his suggestions. He disliked vanity and ostentation in any form. Once a hot-headed young medical graduate urged on him that laymen should not make suggestions to professional physicians because laymen had no hospital training. "What may be your age, young man?" asked Biresvar considerably disgusted at the pedantry of the young braggart. "Twenty-five years" was the defiant reply. "Well" said Biresvar "my friend here (pointing to his old friend Bābu Chuni Lāl Mukerji) and I have each had a hospital training for fifty years," referring of course to their big families which but too frequently brought them into contact with disease. The young doctor blushed and remained silent.

The Rāi Bāhádóor was a very social man. The improvement of his own society was always at his heart. Three or four months before his death he started a movement for the improvement of the *Dákshinātya Baidik* Brāhmans in conjunction with a few other leading members of the community. The institution has already done some good work and promises to attack successfully some of the most difficult of our social problems. During his residence of about 9 months in Burma, Rāi Biresvar Chakravarti Bāhádóor took a prominent part in founding the A'rya Samāj at Rangoon, which is now a flourishing institution. In fact for several months the meetings of the Samāj were held at his residence. When asked by a friend as to why he was so earnest in founding an A'rya Samāj when he was himself not a follower of Dayānanda he said:—"That does not matter. Burma, I find, is a land of atheists. The spread of true knowledge about the One God in any form is desirable in this dark land. I must therefore try to promote this undertaking

and see that an A'rya Samáj is established." And he did see the thing established and left it in competent hands a full blown institution. He did not however enlist himself as a member of the Samáj—he was only a supporter and sympathiser.

Rái Biresvar Chakravarti Báhádoor was always a moderate conservative in his political opinions. He renounced as much the cringing servility of a courtier as the red-hot republicanism of a charlatan politician. Here, as everywhere the Rái Báhádoor was led by the calm light of reason rather than the phantom passions of an impetuous and self-conceived patriot. Deeply convinced as he himself was that the British rule is for the ultimate benefit of India, he never failed to impress on all who came into contact with him, the immense good that would flow from a harmonious combination of Eastern and Western ideas. The laudable and strong points of a man with whom he became acquainted never escaped the Rái Báhádoor's attention. He never shrank from praising all that was praiseworthy in a man. He thoroughly appreciated the refined manners of educated Englishmen, their manliness and courage, their cleanliness and regard for health, their reverence for age, their regular habits and their indomitable energy—and successfully tried to incorporate in himself all these high qualities.

Rái Biresvar Chakravarti Báhádoor had a great thirst for religious and spiritual knowledge and he sometimes took great trouble to meet earnest seekers of truth and delighted in their company and conversation. In Rangoon, he heard with great interest of the European *bhikshu*—a Scotchman named White, of great scholarship—who had renounced Christianity and embraced Buddhism. White had given up all European habits and passing through the regular grades of the Buddhistic religious order had ultimately become an orthodox *bhikshu*—putting on the yellow flowing robes and carrying the begging bowl. Biresvar was very curious to see this ascetic and a meeting was arranged in the princely abode of Maung Hla Oung an influential Burmese gentleman at present occupying the high position of Accountant General, Madras. In due time Biresvar went and was very kindly received by Mr. and Mrs. Oung who led him to the presence of the *Bhikshu* sitting in the midst of a party. In one sense the meeting must have been very disappointing to Biresvar,

for he found the *Bhikshu* to be an atheist of the worst description who would not even utter the word God, but when forced to refer to it in the course of argument would spell out the name G—o—d. There was a long conversation between Biresvar and the white *Bhikshu* in which the former tried to instil into the latter's mind the essence of the religion of devotion and communion and that with some success. Unfortunately the two had no occasion to meet again, for the *Bhikshu* soon after left Rangoon; and Biresvar was heard to express much regret at this and say to his friends in private, that if he got the misguided young Scotch for fifteen days he could bring him back to the fold of the Lord. Biresvar used to spend his time during the nine months' stay in Burma chiefly in reading works belonging to Buddhistic religious literature. Some of these works were written in Páli and though that language was unknown to him at first, he began to plod through works in that language and constantly comparing the texts with the translations soon acquired a fairly good knowledge of Páli by sheer dint of perseverance. His knowledge of Sanskrit undoubtedly helped him in doing so, the two languages being to a great extent similar.

The last of his many excursions was his visit to Allahabad in the autumn of 1901. He stayed there for about two months, visiting the shrines and interesting places over again—for he had visited the place on the occasion of a former tour of pilgrimage through northern India—and noting the changes worked by the hands of time in quarter of a century. Almost every evening he would drive to the romantic *neem*-shaded Jamuná strand or to the picturesque bank of the Gauges at Phá pá máo and sit for some time in silent contemplation. And once he crossed the Ganges and visited the spot on the other side called Jhoonsi where hundreds of Sádhus of all creeds and nationality live in primitive simplicity, far from the strife and noise of the world. He spent a whole day there in conversation with the Sádhus and returned in the evening much impressed with the idea of the superior happiness they were seeking; and carrying away a deep veneration for some of them—specially for a Sádhu of Nanak Panth named Dayáram Bábáji.

Biresvar had his share in the trials and sorrows of the world but his living faith enabled him to bear them patiently and bow in sub-

mission to the inscrutable decrees of Providence. Four of his children died in infancy. He lost his father when he was 12 years old and his first wife died when he was about 30 years of age. His mother lived up to a ripe old age and died only about 15 years ago. Biresvar's devotion to his mother was proverbial amongst those who were on intimate terms with the family. He personally took her round all the principal places of pilgrimage, a Hindu woman wishes to visit; arranged for her living in the strictest orthodoxy enjoined on Hindu widows; acted in all family matters strictly according to her instructions and inclinations; and fulfilled all her wishes to the best of his power as soon as he could know of them. A'dyá Sakti, also cherished the fondest affection for her son and appreciated his devoted services to her. Thus it was that when the old lady lay on her death-bed on the banks of the Bhágirathée and was according to the usual custom asked if she had any desire unfulfilled, *e. g.*, any food which she wished to take or any charitable or other meritorious act which she wished to do before she died—she proudly said "Don't ask me questions like these. I did not bear such a son in my womb as would leave in me any reasonable earthly desire unfulfilled. My only desire was to see him at the last moment. But as you say that he would not reach in all probability before I die, I shall be satisfied with Siddheswar's (Biresvar's eldest son) water. Do prepare a paste of Ganges clay and write the name of Káli on my breast and forehead and all over my body. My blessings to you all." And so the old devoted lady left her mortal clay with perfect calmness and tranquility. Biresvar arrived from Ránci two or three days later in hot haste, to find that the main fountain source of love and affection in his household had dried up for ever.

Biresvar had many hair-breadth escapes from the jaws of imminent death in his eventful life. Some of them were so miraculous that a contemplation of them confirms the belief that Heaven preserved his life for achieving something great. While six or seven years of age he was once playing on the banks of the Hughly at Chandernagore by making heaps of sand in various shapes as children often do. While thus playing he was carried away by a tremendous *bore*. He caught hold of a bamboo post used for fastening boats, but the post gave way under the force of the *bore*

and a piece of the broken bamboo pierced his left side. He was picked up unconscious and apparently dead at a distance of about a mile from the spot where he had disappeared, with a gaping wound on the side. It was several months before the child was all right again.

On another occasion he narrowly escaped death when coming home from Balasore on a brief holiday. In those days there was no railway or steamer service from Orissá but one had to come from Balasore to Uluberia by bullock cart and thence proceed to Calcutta or Chandernagore by steamer or boat. Biresvar with two or three companions reached the Uluberia bazar just as the steamer gave the first whistle. The companions wanted to rest there for the day and proceed by the next day's steamer and pressed Biresvar to adopt the same course. But Biresvar somehow did not agree and leaving them behind jumped into the steamer when the ladder had just been drawn up and the steamer set in motion. He was taken to the captain for his rashness and fined Rs. 5 because it was against the rules to get into a vessel when she was in motion. Biresvar paid the fine and reached home the same evening. Two or three days later he heard that on the night following his departure from Uluberia there had been a sudden *bore* and flood and the whole of the bazar with all men sheltered there had been washed away.

Another narrow escape of Biresvar was on the occasion of the great Shámunagar collision. Biresvar had been on a visit to his cousins in Calcutta and was about to go back to his Chandernagore home. It was at first settled that he would leave by the ill-fated train and all arrangements were made accordingly. But all on a sudden Biresvar changed his mind and much to the annoyance of his cousins, came by the preceding train.

During his tours in Chotánágpur Biresvar had several very narrow escapes. On one occasion he was touring on horse back in the interior of a hilly district. In such places there are deep ravines here and there which appear somewhat like broad cracks in the soil, but are in reality passages gradually carved out by rain water in its course to the nearest stream. Biresvar while riding saw one such ravine which, from a distance of 70 or 80 feet appeared to him to be so narrow that it could be jumped over by his animal and

he accordingly set the horse at full speed. But when about ten or twelve feet from the ravine, Biresvar saw that it was perhaps too broad and almost unconsciously checked the animal. But the animal had then already taken the jump and the effect of checking him was only to make the jump half-hearted. Biresvar gave up everything for lost and shut his eyes expecting to find himself the next moment in the bed of the ravine 20 or 25 feet below the surface, with fractured limbs and the struggling horse pressing on his breast. As it was however, the horse alighted with the front feet and a portion of the body on the other side but the hind feet and the rest of the body hung into the ravine, the abdomen of the animal touching the brink. It was a most perilous position. The animal occasionally scrambled to get up on the other side but unsuccessfully. At last after keeping his rider in intense suspense for two or three minutes, he made a final effort and got up all on a sudden. Biresvar at once sprang down from his saddle, fell on his knees to praise the Lord for saving his life, then caressed his favourite animal and led him by the reins into the nearest village. At the first *Hôhuai's* shop he came across, he saw a large quantity of hot *Jilâpi* just prepared and arranged on a big wooden tray. He purchased the whole lot and gave it to the animal to eat.

On another occasion when attending a call of nature in a forest at a little distance from the tree the shade of which served as his camp of rest he was nearly bitten by a snake of the most venomous species called *Siâl Chândâ*. He discovered his situation and escaped when the monster was staring in glee at its intended victim and was on the point of striking.

Through dangers such as these, did the most merciful Mother safely lead her devoted son in his useful and extraordinary career on this earth. In Her he relied firmly and absolutely; to Her and Her only he appealed for help and mercy and light. Rich in the supreme treasure of Divine love and communion he despised all worldly wealth and position. And let us hope, that now for ever free from the trammels of corporeal existence he has attained that everlasting union with the Supreme Spirit for which he so nobly strove all through his life.

Here we shall finish the present sketch. We feel that we have

performed our important duty imperfectly and unworthily. The picture we have drawn falls far short of the original. There is much which we do not know and much which we know but have left unsaid. We have not spoken of the golden manliness and valour which, in the protection of the weak and the helpless did not shrink from chastising the most formidable Benares *badmásh* in the early seventies; we have not described the amiable benevolence which drew Christian missionaries and Mahommedan moulvis, Hindu pandits and Bráhmo preachers alike under his hospitable roof; we have not painted that fatherly care and concern with which he sought the welfare of his numerous subordinates and dependents; we have not enumerated the numberless men, scattered all over the province, who owe their all to his kindness and sympathy and who feel his loss as keenly as the members of his own family. All this and many other things we have left unsaid for various reasons. If Bengal learns to know her own sons before it is too late they may perhaps see light.

And now we conclude with the following verses from Ráj Biresvar Chakravarti Bábhádoor's translation of the Bhagavad Gítá about to be sent to press. Nothing can be a more appropriate conclusion to the sketch, however brief and imperfect, of a life so divinely useful :

" Unnumbered births, O Arjun" said the Lord
 " Both thine have passed and Mine, which I record
 " And know full well, but thou dost never know
 " Forgetful all, O terror of thy foe !

" Although unhorn, unchanging, Lord of all,
 " Whom actions done to birth do ne'er recall,
 " Suppressing nature Mine I take My birth
 " Or seem to take to men upon this earth.

" Whene'er doth fade the light of virtue pure,
 " And vile impiety flourish all secure,
 " Create I then Myself as mortal man
 " Know thou, O Partha ! this My heavenly plan.

" To save the good, whom sins at times decoy
 " The curse of earth, the wicked, to destroy.
 " To virtue's rule establish on this stage
 " I take My birth as man from age to age."

K. P. D.

The following extract from a letter written by Sir Alfred Croft M.A., D.L., K.C.I.E., to the editor of this work will shew how the writer of the above narrative has acquitted himself in the delicate task undertaken by him :—

“MY DEAR JNAN SARAN,

It was a kind thought of yours to send me the National Magazine containing an account of your late father's life. I have read it with the greatest interest. The narrative is very well-written and presents a faithful picture of your father's life, his high character and unswerving integrity.”

The way in which the news of the death of Rāi Biresvar Chakravarti Bāhādūr was received by the press of Bengal, both English and vernacular, shews how widely he was known and how highly his worth was appreciated. The leading Bengali weeklies, the *Bangabāsi* and the *Sanjibani* published biographical notices accompanied by an admirable likeness of Biresvar in office dress. The *Pratibāsi*, the *Nubaidhān*, the *Nabyabhārat* and other Bengali papers published articles expressing regard and admiration. Anglo-Indian papers like the *Indian Daily News* and the *Statesman* announced the sad event in suitable terms. The *Bengalee* and the *Amrita Bāzār Patrikā* referred to the deceased in appreciating notices and the *Unity* and the *Minister* had a review of his life and works. Those who are acquainted with the different sects and classes represented by the papers named above will at once see how Biresvar succeeded, by his high character and noble work, in winning the respect and affection of all classes of his countrymen.

INTRODUCTION.

Section I—GENERAL.

The poem known as the Bhagavad Gītā is a short episode in that wonderful and voluminous Sanskrit epic, the Mahābhārata. The Mahābhārata consists of eighteen Parbans or parts, the sixth of which is named after the hero Bhishma. The Bhagavad Gītā covers eighteen chapters of this part, namely, from the twenty-fourth to the forty-first, and consists of seven hundred *slokas* or complets.

The position of the Bhagavad Gita in the Mahabharata.

As an exposition of the principal philosophical doctrines of the *Upanishads*, the Bhagavad Gītā is a complete treatise in itself. A knowledge of the preceding parts of the great epic is not essential to the proper understanding of that admirable exposition. A brief sketch of the narrative of the Mahābhārata

down to the Bhishma Parban is however given below to enable the reader to follow the context of the opening book of the Bhagavad Gītā. This opening book is the link connecting the philosophical portion of the Bhagavad Gītā with the main story of the Mahābhārata.

In the sacred line of Bharata there was a king named Sántanu who ruled at Hastināpur near modern Delhi. A brief sketch of the plot of the Mahabharata. Bhishma and Bichitra-biryaa were his sons. Bhishma the elder of the two took a vow in his youth that he would neither marry nor reign as king. Accordingly after the death of his father Sántanu he brought up his half-brother Bichitra-biryaa and made him king. But king Bichitra-biryaa died soon after and Bhishma had to take up the guardianship of Bichitra-biryaa's sons.

The princes who thus grew up under the affectionate care of

their uncle were named Dhritarāshtra and Pāndu. The former being blind from birth the latter was made king by Bhishma. Dhritarāshtra married a princess of Gāndhār by whom he had many sons the eldest of whom was named Duryodhan. Pāndu had two wives; one Prithā a princess of Dwārkā, brought up in the house of the Prince of Kuntibhoj and the other a princess of Madra. By the first wife Pāndu had three sons, Yudhisthir, Bhim and Arjun; and by the second, two, Nakul and Sahadeb. The sons of Dhritarāshtra were called the Kauravas and the five sons of Pāndu, the Pāndavas.

While the Kauravas and the Pāndavas were yet young Pāndu died and the work of bringing them up was taken up by their unselfish grand-uncle Bhishma. He placed them under a renowned Brāhman preceptor named Drona who instructed them in the *śāstras* and in the use of arms. When they grew up, Yudhisthir, the eldest of them all was declared heir-apparent. This offended Duryodhan, the eldest Kaurava, who himself aspired to the throne; and the blind Dhritarāshtra was accordingly persuaded to banish the Pāndavas from the capital Hastinapur to Vārānāsi. Duryodhan then arranged a secret plot to burn the Pāndavas to death in their new station; but the Pāndavas escaped and fled through jungles to a place called Ekachakra where they lived as strangers in the house of a hospitable Brāhman.

While thus living in disguise the Pāndavas heard that the king of Pāncālā had invited all princes and heroes and declared his intention to give away his daughter Draupadi in marriage to the best archer in the assembly. They at once started with a view to compete at the ceremony and on arrival found that all the important princes of the time, including their cousins the Kauravas, had assembled. The test of strength and skill set before them was to manipulate a gigantic bow and with its help to hit a mark placed at a great height behind a revolving disc in which there was only one slit for the arrow to pass. After the other assembled chiefs failed, Arjun succeeded in fulfilling the conditions of the test and the beautiful Draupadi became his wife. About this time good counsel again prevailed with Dhritarāshtra and he invited his now famous nephews, the Pāndavas, back to Hastinapur. To prevent further friction between them and his sons, he assigned to them the forest tract of

Khândesh which was speedily reclaimed by the Pândavas and converted into a flourishing principality with capital at Indraprastha. The Pândavas rapidly gained power and influence and in a few years King Yudisthir of Indraprastha celebrated the Rajsuya ceremony by which in those days a king made himself recognized as supreme amongst the neighbouring chiefs.

The prosperity of the Pândavas kindled the jealousy of Duryodhan with fresh vigour and he hit upon a plan for ruining the Pândavas. Having secured the services of his maternal uncle Sakuni who had acquired facility in winning at dice by deceit, he challenged Yudhisthir to gamble and contrived by a succession of games to win everything which the Pândavas had and to secure their exile for thirteen years as mendicants.

The Pândavas patiently fulfilled the terms. They spent thirteen years in exile with the faithful Draupadi. Their privations and sufferings were great. But ultimately the period of exile came to an end and they returned and claimed back their kingdom of Indraprastha from the Kauravas. The ill-advised Duryodhan, however, answered with an emphatic 'no,' and on further representation being made replied that without war he would not give even as much land as could be covered by the point of a needle.

War was therefore inevitable and each party prepared for the great struggle resolved to die or to conquer. Nearly all the important chiefs of India living at the time sided with one party or the other; the collective forces on the side of Duryodhan being 11 *akshouhinis* or divisions and that on the side of Yudhisthir 7 *akshouhinis*.* These troops assembled on the vast plain of Kurukshetra north-west of modern Delhi.

To secure the alliance of Krishna, the great prince of Dwarká, regarded even then by many as an incarnation of Divinity, was considered a matter of great importance by both parties and it so happened that both Duryodhan and Arjun arrived at his place on the same day to solicit his assistance in the struggle about to ensue. Duryodhan entered his room first and finding him sleeping took

* An *akshouhini* consisted of 21,870 elephants, 21,870 chariots, 65,610 ~~and~~ ^{payahyemen} and 1,09,350 foot soldiers.

a seat near his head. Arjun then entered and took a seat near his foot. When Krishna awoke his eyes naturally first fell on Arjun and then on Duryodhan. Both of them at once put forth their prayers, Duryodhan pleading that he was the first to arrive while Arjun claimed preference on the ground of having been first seen. To effect a compromise and please both, Krishna said that one of them might have him alone, unarmed and not taking any active part in the struggle, while the other could have the whole of his vast army each man in which was a brave and skilled veteran. On this Arjun prayed that Krishna alone, with all the restrictions imposed, might remain on his side while Duryodhan eagerly accepted the offered army. It was then arranged between Krishna and Arjun that the former would act as the latter's charioteer during the war.

The weak and good-natured Dhritarâshtra was greatly mortified at the prospect of this fearful struggle between his sons on one side and his nephews on the other. One day the great sage Vyâsa appeared before him and said "Son, do not be overpowered with grief. I can see that your sons and the myriads of assembled warriors are already within the jaws of death. But the tide of events cannot be turned. If you wish to see this great war I can restore the power of vision to you." Dhritarâshtra said that he had no desire to see the slaughter of his own people but he would rather hear a full description of it. On this Vyâsa said "Very well; this Sanjay, who is your constant attendant, is henceforth endowed with supernatural powers of seeing and hearing. He will see and hear everything in connection with the war and describe the events to you in minute detail."

The war which thus began lasted for eighteen days and ended in a total rout and general slaughter of the forces of the Kauravas and their allies. As arranged before, Krishna acted as Arjun's charioteer during the battle; and on one occasion when Arjun got depressed at the thought of having to kill his own relatives and shrank from action, Krishna explained that such thoughts were unworthy and unphilosophic and dictated a proper course of action for his guidance. Arjun was not to be easily satisfied and he asked question after question as doubts arose in his mind. Krishna answered each question lucidly,

The setting of
the Bhagavad
Gita.

sympathetically and convincingly and the dialogue which thus resulted is one of the sublimest and at the same time one of the most fascinating works in the whole range of philosophical literature of the world. This dialogue is the Bhagavad Gîtâ. It is put in the mouth of Sanjay who relates to the blind king Dhritarâshtra how Arjun got dejected, what he asked and how Krishna removed his doubts.

In the dialogue which constitutes the Bhagavad Gîtâ, Krishna is represented as answering Arjun not as an ordinary instructor but as the Supreme Being Himself. Arjun also knows whom he addresses. In fact Arjun stands for *jîb-atma* or man spirit and Krishna for *param-atma* or God-spirit. Little man, perplexed and bewildered, eagerly represents his doubts and difficulties to the All-wise who has condescended for a time to manifest Himself; and the Lord overflowing in love as in wisdom, instructs him with Divine eloquence. A noble conception this—and as all who have read the Gîtâ to any effect will admit—nobly executed.

The Bhagavad Gîtâ occupies a very high place in the religious and philosophical literature of the Hindus. It contains in a very condensed but lucid form some of the highest doctrines of the *upanishads*. "The *upanishads* are kine; Krishna the milkman; Arjun the calf; and the sweet Gîtâ is milk thus obtained to be enjoyed by the learned."* To read the Gîtâ or portions of it every day is considered to be a work of great religious merit. And many a Hindu finds comfort and solace in its luminous lines during the closing years of a life embittered by trials, sorrows and misfortunes.

It is not our intention in this introduction to enter on a detailed critical examination of the contents of the Gîtâ from a philosophic or any other stand point. But as any introduction, however brief, will be incomplete without an attempt to indicate the value of the work regarded, first as a philosophical system and secondly as a practical treatise on self-culture, a few observations on these subjects, as well as on the probable date of its composition are made below.

* *Gita-Mahatmyam* verse 5. The *Gita-Mahatmyam* is a sort of appendix to the Gita consisting of eighty-three couplets. It must have been composed by an admirer of the orthodox type. It extols the work and its religious importance.

Section II—THE GITA' AS A PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM.

The philosophical doctrines found in the Gita do not as a whole correspond with those contained in any particular system of Hindu philosophy. Six of these systems are usually recognized and they are arranged in three groups *viz.*, the *Sāṃkhya* and the *Pātanjal* the *Vedānta* and the *Mimāṃsā*, the *Nyāya* and the *Baiseshik*. Each of these groups may be supposed to constitute a larger and more complete system, one system in a group supplementing the other. But the Gita considered as a school of philosophy cannot be said to coincide with any one of even the larger systems represented by the groups mentioned above.

Speaking broadly it may be held that the Gita presents a grand combination of the first two of the three groups described above *viz.*, a combination of the *Sāṃkhya* and *Pātanjal* with the *Vedānta* and *Mimāṃsā* systems. It is a triumph of the wonderful harmonizing skill of a vigorous and capacious master mind. It represents the achievement of a savant deeply versed in sacred lore—the *vedas*, the *Brāhmanas* and the *Upanishads*,—who perceiving how brilliant schools of thought, hostile to one another, were crystallizing out of those common crude materials, made a noble and earnest effort to fuse the pure and valuable substance in each into a beautiful and perfect gem. It is a work in which the main doctrines underlying four different schools of philosophy, exist in a state of sublime and harmonious union, giving rise to a system which though not altogether free from complexities or difficulties, is still sufficiently coherent and consistent to be understood and admired as one of the boldest but most rational flights in the whole range of speculative thought of mankind.

To understand how the Gita harmoniously combines the essence

of four such widely divergent systems let us very briefly examine the main doctrines of each :—

(1) The *Sāṃkhya* system codified by Kapila holds that the universe has sprung from a primordial essence called *Prakṛiti* which is itself made up of three constituent principles or *gunas* called *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Twenty-three other *tattwas* or entities spring from this *Prakṛiti* by a process of spontaneous evolution, and make up the universe. The *Puruṣa* or soul is a twenty-fifth entity not springing from *Prakṛiti* and destitute of *gunas*. Individual souls are separate and each remains unchanged through successive transmigrations. Each soul is bound to *Prakṛiti* in the shape of a body. The liberation of the soul from the clutches of *Prakṛiti* by the acquirement of true knowledge should be the aim of man. As regards Godhead the attitude of the *Sāṃkhya* system is one of pure agnosticism.

(2) The *Yoga* system, also called the *Pāṇjāl* system from its redactor Patanjali, closely follows the *Sāṃkhya* but differs from it in acknowledging the existence of a Supreme Being. It also lays down a new way of attaining the liberation of the soul from *Prakṛiti viz.*, getting rid of all disturbing thought. Various means of mental concentration leading to this state are described.

(3) The *Vedānta* system of Vyāsa or Bādarāyana as expounded by Sankarācharyya, is the creed of unflinching pantheism the formula of which is *Eham eva Advītiyam*, 'one only without a second.' It acknowledges but one eternal all-pervading essence which is both creator and creation, actor and act. Whatever else appears to exist besides this essence at any time or under any circumstances, is the result of *māyā* or illusion.

(4) The *Mīmāṃsā* system of Jaimini is usually known as *Purva-Mīmāṃsā* or *Karma-Mīmāṃsā* in contradistinction to the *Vedānta* which is known also as *Uttara-mīmāṃsā* or *Brahma Mīmāṃsā*. It deals with the *Purva* or first portion of the vedas which describes various kinds of *karma* or rituals, while the *Vedānta* deals with the topic of Brahman discussed in the *uttara* or latter portion of the vedas *i. e.*, the *upaniṣads*. According to Jaimini the vedas are eternal and self-existent.

The aim of man should be to follow perfectly the ritualistic portion of the vedas which is far more important than the portion dealing with knowledge. The *Mīmāṃsā* system therefore tries to clear up the doubtful points and remove the difficulties found in the ritualistic portion.

For the sake of completeness and also to clearly shew that there is no reference in the *Gītā* to the two systems of the remaining group of Hindu philosophy except perhaps in one solitary instance*, we add here very brief summaries of the doctrines of the *Nyāya* and the *Vaiśeṣik* systems.

(5) The *Nyāya* system, said to have been propounded by Gotama, approaches philosophy through the channel of logic. Having laid down that there are twelve subjects about which right knowledge is to be obtained and four methods of proof by which such knowledge is to be arrived at, it proceeds to lay down an elaborate system of reasoning for guarding against error in the application of these methods of proof. The *Nyāya* system recognizes atoms as the ultimate material cause of the universe and both these atoms and souls of men are held to be eternal. The human soul when joined to mind can work, desire, think and feel. The existence of God is recognized. The aim of man should be to get rid of all false notions which lead man to action and rebirth and are the cause of all misery.

(6) The *Vaiśeṣik* system of Kanāda is a further development, mainly of the physical side, of the *Nyāya*. It divides the whole subject of human study into seven *padārthas* or categories viz., substance, quality, action, generality, particularity, perpetual connection and non-existence. The first category of substance is subdivided into nine items viz., earth, water, light, air, ether, time, space, soul and mind. This system lays much stress on the eternal ultimate difference between these substances and derives its name from this doctrine of particularity. In other respects the *Vaiśeṣik* doctrines follow the *Nyāya* system.

* Book X, verse 32.

It will now be easy to follow the harmony brought about by the author of the Bhagavad Gītā. He has taken the whole of the Sāṃkhya doctrines regarding the primordial essence *Prakṛiti* composed of the three *gunas*, the evolution of the universe consisting of the various entities or *tattwas* from *Prakṛiti*, the immortality of the soul which exists apart from *Prakṛiti* and is unchangeable through successive transmigrations, and the connection between soul and *Prakṛiti*. But the Gītā goes two steps in advance of the Sāṃkhya system. In the Sāṃkhya, souls are distinct from one another; according to the Gītā they are different phases or manifestations of One Great Spirit—parts of the Great Soul, individualized by their union with *Prakṛiti*. And whereas in the Sāṃkhya, *Purusha* and *Prakṛiti* i. e., soul and the primordial essence of the universe are eternally distinct, they are not so in the Gītā. By introducing the noble conception of a Supreme Spirit beyond both soul and *Prakṛiti*, the author of the Gītā has not only obliterated the ultimate distinction between soul and soul but also that between soul and *Prakṛiti*. He has thus very effectively incorporated into his system the essence of the *Vedānta*. According to him the soul as well as *Prakṛiti* are manifestations of the Supreme Spirit—the former a superior and the latter an inferior manifestation. At the end of a period of creation these manifestations cease and there is only the Supreme Spirit and nothing else. Here we have the most orthodox *Vedānta*, *Ekam eva Advītiyam*, in the strictest sense. But along with the dawn of a new creation the manifestations *vis.*, souls and the *Prakṛiti* make their appearance; and in as much as these manifestations are real and not mere illusions as in the *Vedānta* and are also essentially different *as manifestations*, we have the solid dualism of the Sāṃkhya system. In short we have the ordinary doctrine of *dvaitabāda* or dualism recognized in the Gītā but carried to a higher platform, where it becomes identical with *advaitabāda* or pantheism. This very nearly coincides with the great school of *bisista advaitabāda* or qualified pantheism developed in a later period by Ramanuja and his followers.

The way in which the *Gītā* has incorporated the most important doctrines of the *Pātanjal* system is equally remarkable. The existence of God and devotion to Him as a means of attaining salvation are emphasized, and great importance is attached to the practice of concentrating the mind and getting rid of all disturbing thought. The *Sāmkhya* and *Vedānta* methods of attaining the supreme bliss *viśv*, by the acquirement of knowledge is not ignored, but harmony is established by proving that when devotion ripens and concentration is complete, true knowledge comes of itself.

In incorporating the doctrines of *Yoga* philosophy in his system, the author of the *Gītā* seems to have improved upon the system of Patanjali in at least one respect. In the *Pātanjal* system, the *Yoga* aimed at is scarcely different from the *Sāmkhya* liberation. When the soul liberates itself from the clutches of *Prakṛiti*, knows its own pure nature and rests in itself the followers of the *Sāmkhya* and of the *Pātanjal* have got their *summum bonum*. But the *Gītā* goes further and points out that the attainment of this state leads to direct communion and contact with the Supreme Spirit—it makes the “dewdrop glide into the shining sea.” The *summum bonum* of the *Gītā* is *sayujya* or complete union with the Supreme Spirit which is a state higher than the *Pātanjal kaibalya* or separation of the soul from *Prakṛiti*. *Kaibalya*, at best, is a form of *Sārūpya* which means the attainment of likeness only to the Supreme Spirit, and is one stage lower in the ladder of spiritual progress than *Sayujya* or complete union*

Even the *Mīmāṃsā* has not been entirely ignored in the *Gītā*. The vedic rites and ceremonies which form the subject matter of this system and the proper performance of which is insisted upon with so much force throughout its *sūtras* or aphorisms are praised in the *Gītā* and their good effects pointed out in clear and emphatic language. But

* The four final stages in the path of spiritual progress are described in Sanskrit philosophy as *Salokya* or residence in same heaven with God, *Samīpya* or proximity to God, *Sārūpya* or attainment of the nature of God and *Sayujya* or complete union.

while the *Mīmāṃsā* treats the *vedic* rites and their results *vis.*, the attainment of the various *lokas* or heavens as ends in themselves, the author of the *Gītā* values rites as only an effective means of spiritual culture and advancement. Herein lies the key of the difficulty which the *Gītā* presents on first reading to the student, some passages praising *vedic* rites and enjoining them on the people while others seem to deprecate such rites and ceremonies.*

It will be in vain that the reader will search for any *Nyāya* or *Vaisesik* doctrines in the pages of the *Gītā*. It is difficult to conceive why such a powerful master mind, which apparently set before itself the gigantic task of reconciling the differences between the great systems of philosophy prevailing in his time and working out a perfect system of his own by the combination of all, should have let alone such a great system as the *Nyāya* supplemented by the *Vaisesik*. It is not likely that the difficulty of the task daunted him; and a passing reference to what appears to be an important *Nyāya* doctrine† tends to shew that he was acquainted with the system. No explanation of this omission appears to have been given by any scholar and the present writer has none to offer.‡

* Compare for example Book II, 43-45 with Book III, 10-15. See Book III, note under stanza 10.

† Book X, verse 32.

‡ Since writing the above the writer has come across a very learned work in Bengali by Mr. Hirendra Nath Dutt dealing with the relation of the *Bhagavad Gita* to the various systems of Hindu philosophy. Mr. Dutt seems to think that the author of the *Gita* has shunned the *Nyaya* and the *Vaisesik* because the place of God in these systems is not one of primary importance. But when we see that the *Gita* has not shunned even the godless *Samkhya* and *Mimamsa* systems, the explanation appears to be inadequate.

*Section III—THE GITA' AS A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON
SPIRITUAL CULTURE.*

The Gita is not merely a system of philosophy, it is also a practical treatise on spiritual culture. It not only explains and harmonizes the different views which philosophers have taken about the nature of matter and spirit, but it tries to show at the same time how the apparently different ends to be attained by the human soul according to the different schools, converge practically to the same point. It also proves how the means laid down for attaining those ends, though necessarily seeming at the first sight to proceed on entirely different lines, can be regarded as essential parts of one great system of spiritual culture. The practice of vedic rites and caste duties enjoined by the *Mimāṃsā* system, the culture of the sacred feeling of *Bhakti* or fervent devotion to a personal deity, the constant spiritual exercises prescribed in the *Yoga* system by which the power of concentration is developed, the attempts to realize the existence of the soul apart from anything else in which consists the *Sāṃkhya* *summum bonum* of *kaibalya*, the intense and constant contemplation of the spirit which leads to the gradual perception of a grand and all-pervading shining ocean in which the contemplator ultimately dissolves his existence and realizes the highest Vedāntic truth of *Soham* or 'That am I',—all these processes of spiritual advancement are reconciled in the Gita as the different steps of one grand and connected staircase by which man rises from the ordinary level of mean and material worldliness into the pure and æthereal height of divine communion. The Gita rejects nothing but puts everything in its proper place; it finds out the true significance and weight of the rules and practices laid down in each system and divests them of the imaginary meaning and exaggerated importance attached to them in course of time by the bigotry, superstition or ignorance of a period of decline. Even the physical processes of con-

The Gita evolves a progressive system of spiritual culture out of numerous conflicting systems.

trolling the life-winds practised by the *Hatha Yogis*, have not been ignored by the author of the Gita but carefully utilized in their proper place and to the proper extent in building up this wonderful staircase of spiritual culture.

The Gita must be looked upon from the point of view above described, in order that the two defects discovered in it in the highest and most well-informed quarter may to a great extent, if not completely, disappear. In the first place it has been held that there are several passages in the Gita which it is not very easy to reconcile with one another.* Nothing is more natural. If an author were to write a book of instructions for the guidance of travellers who, starting from the plains, desired to visit a hill-station on the lofty ranges of the Himalayas, we should not be surprised if certain instructions laid down in one part of the work, appeared on a first sight to be exactly the opposite of those given in another part. In the vast world of spiritual culture there are many well-defined stages of progress and the instructions regarding spiritual advancement which may suit an individual in a particular stage, may be very much unsuited to the requirements of another who is on a quite different level.

The stages distinctly traceable in the Gita are stated below :—

Stages of spiritual advancement.

(1) The first stage is that of faithful performance of the duties enjoined in the common *śāstras*.

As the senses often tempt a man to become irregular and reckless, an honest attempt to lead a regular *śāstric* life leads to, (2) constant culture and patient struggle to gain mastery over the organs of sense and of action and over the mind ; then follow in succession: (3) freedom from desire and the performance of work without attachment ; (4) consequent equanimity of the soul which enables it to see things in their true light ; (5) the sense that actions proceed from *Prakṛiti* and her virtues and that man is not the actor ; (6) the gradual perception of the soul apart from other existences and along with it that of the Grand Infinite Soul of similar nature ; (7) constant contemplation of the Infinite Spiritual existence which is gradually

* Telang's Translation of the Bhagavad Gita in the Sacred Books of the East series, Introduction page 11.

seen to be the only ultimate existence embracing all things and even the contemplator himself, (8) ardent devotion to the Supreme Infinite existence with a true knowledge of its nature and (9) last of all the *summum bonum viz.*, eternal, perfect communion with the Great One ; these are the various stages which the Gîtâ lays down for man. It is needless to say that the first three stages are most difficult to pass through, but when the third stage has been attained the rest of the process follows easily and quickly.

In Book XII an alternative is laid down for the first few stages and it is stated that the third stage of Karma Yoga referred to above can be attained through the medium of devotion. Various means of maturing devotion have been laid down *viz.*, practice, knowledge (acquired and indirect—not the direct perception of Infinite Spirit which is *the* true knowledge) and contemplation. The object of all these methods of devotion is to attain Karma Yoga *i. e.*, the practice of action without desire and attachment. Karma Yoga attained, the remaining stages succeed one another as described in the preceding paragraph.

To illustrate how the alleged inconsistencies in the Gîtâ disappear on the above view we will take an example. It has been stated * that the value of knowledge is a point on which the Gîta is guilty of self-contradiction. In support of this charge it has been pointed out that in IV, 38 it is stated that nothing is so pure as knowledge ; in VI, 46 it is laid down that the man in Yoga is superior to the man of knowledge ; in VII, 18 knowledge is again accorded the highest esteem, it being held that a man with knowledge is one with God ; and in XII, 12 it is maintained in apparent contradiction to the above that devoted concentration is better than knowledge. It is most interesting to see how the apparent inconsistencies melt away if we bear in mind the context in each case and the theory of different stages referred to above. In IV, 38 the purity of true knowledge is extolled but in the same stanza it is said that such knowledge arises after Karma Yoga has been attained (the word Yoga in the second line of IV, 38 means

A particular apparent inconsistency explained by way of illustration.

* Telang's translation referred to in the last foot-note, Introduction, page 11-12.

Karma Yoga), and in the next stanza it is made clear that knowledge is extolled because it leads to salvation. The reader will observe that this is exactly the place of true knowledge in our gradation. Similarly there is nothing contradictory in VI, 46 where those who have attained communion with the Infinite are described as having proceeded further than those who have simply obtained knowledge. Reading verse VII, 18 exactly the same view is found ; while it will be abundantly clear from what has been recorded above regarding the stages described in Chapter XII, that the word 'knowledge' in XII, 12 is a very different thing from the true and high knowledge which follows Karma Yoga. 'Knowledge' as used in XII, 12 means common knowledge which matures devotion and which is acquired by such practices as constant attention to the instructions of preceptors, frequent study of religious books &c. This preliminary devotion to an incarnation is an earlier stage than Karma Yoga to which it leads, and is not the devotion with true knowledge which follow several stages after the attainment of Karma Yoga.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples. The reader can himself select passages apparently inconsistent with each other, and keeping the context in view, apply a process of reasoning similar to the above. After a certain number of such exercises he will undoubtedly find that it is neither rashness nor undue partiality to assert, that allowing for figures of speech always permissible in compositions with a poetical garb and the use of some words in different senses in different parts of the work, the Gita, attentively read and fully understood is free from inconsistencies of any degree of importance.

The second alleged defect of the Gita* is that the sequence of ideas throughout the verses can not always be easily followed and that it is a non-systematic work. To the novice or the superficial reader the several parts of a book which at one place speaks of one system, and a few verses thence of another, may appear incongruous and self-contradictory. But it is difficult to see how learned critics

Alleged non-systematic nature of the Gita. a groundless charge.

* Telang's translation referred to above, Introduction, page 13.

familiar with the numerous Sanskrit commentaries of the work, found anything to complain of in this respect. Many of the commentators make it a point to show at the beginning of the note of each *śloka*, how the idea contained in the preceding verse naturally leads to that in the one under consideration. And similarly in the remarks prefixed to the note on the first *śloka* of each book, the commentators take care to explain how the chain of thought is carried in one unbroken and continuous line through the successive parts of the work. These *ābhāses* or foreshadowing passages are the most interesting parts of a commentary ; and to those accustomed to the style of the Sanskrit philosophical commentators, these connecting links do not at all seem to be laboured.

To make clear the sequence of ideas throughout the verses of the Bhagavad Gītā, and to bring out more fully than has been described above, the several stages of spiritual culture and advancement laid down in it, we summarize below in the form of a dialogue the whole of the Divine lay. In this summary the questions are not those that are asked by Arjun in the Gītā. They are imaginary questions framed, after the fashion of Sanskrit commentators, with the view of bringing out the sequence of ideas. The portion of the text covered by each answer has been carefully marked. Explanations of well-defined and well-known philosophical doctrines have been passed over with a mere reference, the chief object being to present the ideas original in the Gītā, in a well-connected and cogent form.

The Bhagavad Gītā presented in the form of a short dialogue to bring out the systematic and continuous nature of the work.

Arjun.—I will not fight because I do not wish to kill my friends and relatives. [Upto II, 9].

Krishna.—There is no killing as the soul is immortal. [II, 9-30]

A. Very well, but still why should I fight ?

K. Because fighting is the duty of your caste according to the sacred books and laws of society. [II, 31-38].

A. Admitted. But I can not persuade my mind to fight as it will cause me intolerable grief.

K. Spiritual culture is necessary to get over this frame of mind. Those that practice vedic rites for their own sake, do not know

anything about this culture. It consists in constantly trying to do one's duty, without selfish attachment and desire for fruits. When success is attained in this culture, one is not disturbed by the action of one's senses and rises above worldly happiness and misery. With perfect self-control and imperturbable equanimity, such a man finds complete rest in communion with God. [II, 39-72].

- A. Then let me leave this war and try to attain that state. Why do you ask me to fight ?
- K. Because you are only a beginner and have not reached that stage of spiritual culture when a man may leave work and can practise Divine communion with true knowledge (*Jnana Yoga*). You must pass through that earlier stage of spiritual culture (*Karma Yoga*) in which actions are to be purified *i. e.*, divested of the elements of attachment and desire. You can not become workless by simply leaving this battle. Your mind will remain busy with worldly thoughts and objects. So, why leave what is your duty ? In your stage a man should perform all his duties according to the Vedas and other sacred books. These duties have been laid down with great care for the benefit of mankind. But acts should be done not for their own sake, but as affording the ground on which to practise spiritual culture. Only those who have effected this culture and acquired true knowledge can afford to remain (though they should not remain) indifferent to action.— [III, 1-26]. They can see that action is merely the doing of Nature (*Prakriti*) and her virtues; the soul is a higher existence apart from *Prakriti*. It is desire, pervading the senses, mind and reason, which covers this true knowledge in common men. The soul is subtler than the senses, mind and reason and is untouched by desire. When therefore the senses, mind and reason are under control, desire vanishes and true knowledge of action and actor comes. (III, 27-42).
- A. But these doctrines regarding spiritual culture seem recent and heterodox ; are they really so ?
- K. No. They were preached again and again by Me in My former incarnations and many men have gained true knowledge through them and attained salvation. [IV, 1-10].

But most men cannot at once rise up to that high level and there are therefore various classes or castes who worship according to their own standards and get My response to their prayers according to those standards. All these men should practise spiritual culture *i. e.* try to do their proper work, always maintaining the mental state corresponding to worklessness.—[IV, 11-18]. This culture will, as stated before, impress man with the truth that he is not the actor; and following up the natural question 'Who then is the actor?' he will perceive that all actions proceed from the great Brahman, the cause alike of nature and of human soul.—[IV, 19-24]. The rites and exercises which various sects of men practise as means of this spiritual culture, are different; but they are all good as they lead to the perception of that grand truth. [IV, 25-33]. This great knowledge leads to undisturbed peace and Divine communion.—[IV, 34-42].

- A. All this advancement is to be attained by maintaining a mental state corresponding to worklessness. Why not, then, renounce action altogether?
- K. Let there be no confusion between renouncement of action and *Karmā Yoga i. e.*, renouncement of selfish desires only, accompanied by the performance of proper action. To be able to reach the stage when one can, if he chooses, really renounce acts, one must pass through the stage of *Karma Yoga*. A practiser of *Karma Yoga* is not touched by his actions.—[V, 1-13]. By *Karma Yoga* a man can see that though God creates what we call actors and actions, and also the laws by which actions produce their fruits, the sense, that actors cause actions and enjoy the fruits thereof, is a false delusion on the part of man. For one who sees thus, there is no sin or virtue, a dog and a learned Brāhman are equal, and there is no cause of disturbance in the highest worldly gain or the severest worldly misfortune.—[V, 14-20]. Absorbed in the contemplation of the spirit, and in perfect peace and tranquillity such a man gradually loses himself in the Great Spirit and becomes identified with It.—[V, 21-29].
- A. Very well, let me see if I have followed you. Ordinary men

should begin spiritual culture by trying to do their *Shāstric* duties without desires and passions. It is these desires and passions that cloud the understanding of common men and make them feel that actions are done by them and are the cause of their happiness and misery. Consequently when, as the result of culture, desires and passions disappear, the true knowledge dawns on man, that actions are not done by him, but proceed apparently from *Prakṛiti* or nature, but really and ultimately from the Great Spirit of which both nature and the soul are manifestations. When he contemplates on this Great Spirit he feels himself absorbed in Its all-pervading existence (*recapitulation*). All right, so far; are there any further developments?

- K. Yes. We have reached that stage when a man becomes a real renouncer by renouncing fruits of action, perceives the spirit, and sees everything with an equal eye.—[VI, 1-9]. A man who has proceeded so far and tasted the sweets of contemplation, longs to make it a habit. He lives secluded and in surroundings which favour such contemplation, avoiding excesses or irregularities of any kind. Drawing away his thoughts from all worldly objects, he finds complete rest within himself and enjoys the supreme bliss of Divine communion.—[VI, 10-24]. By patient practice these intervals of Divine communion are prolonged, till, at last, the mind, ordinarily so fickle and restive, is completely under subordination.—[VI, 25-36].
- A. Permit me to ask one thing. All men, you say, should begin to practise *Karma Yoga* and you have also described what happens to those who succeed in *Karma Yoga i. e.*, can get rid of desires and passions. But what about those who do not succeed completely?
- K. They retain what spiritual culture they effect in this life and get opportunities of improving that culture in the next; and in this way after successive births they get one in which they succeed in attaining the supreme bliss of communion with Me—the highest state man can attain.—[VI, 37-47].
- A. May I enquire the nature of the Great Spirit, communion with which is regarded as the supreme bliss?

- K. It is the eternal existence of which both nature and soul are manifestations. It is that from which the universe springs and into which it dissolves. It is the essence of everything.—[VII, 1-12]. It is not readily recognized in its manifestations on account of delusion. Few are the men who get this delusion dispelled by knowledge; the majority steeped in it, worship various gods for attaining such objects as residence in heaven, which end sooner or later.—[VII, 13-27]. Those only whose sins have come to an end, seek the Great Spirit and attain true knowledge about it, as well as its various manifestations *e.g.* soul, conscience, matter, the Sun-god and the various actions proceeding from them.—[VII, 28—VIII, 4] An attainment of the knowledge of the Great Spirit and contemplation of it even at the time of death, result in salvation.—[VIII, 5-15]. The result of all other meritorious acts is the attainment of a happy state for a finite period, after which there is rebirth; the result of knowing and contemplating the Great Spirit is salvation from which there is no return to mortal existence.—[VIII, 16-22]. When therefore a man dies, his soul is, as it were, carried away either by bright spirits through light into the Divine presence for eternal communion with God; or by dark spirits through lightless regions into a new world from which the soul is sure to be reborn again.—[VIII, 23-28].
- A. I have now heard something the nature of the Great Spirit, and I have also seen how the spiritual culture described by you, leads men to a habit of contemplating It with true knowledge regarding It. What is the next stage?
- K. Constant contemplation of the Great Spirit leads a man to a more and more complete realization of the indescribable grandeur and transcendental nature of the Supreme Existence, which those without spiritual culture can never know. Ardent devotion to such an existence naturally follows, and the devotee losing himself in the sublime object of his devotion sees Its existence in everything.—[IX, 1-19]. Worshippers according to ordinary rites can never have such vision.—[IX 20-25]. Contemplation of and devotion, as above described, to the Supreme Spirit raises even the lowest man

to the sublime height of Divine communion. As I am the Supreme Spirit, Men should be devoted to Me and I will dispel their ignorance.—[IX, 26—X, 11].

- A. Kindly describe in detail the transcendental nature of the Great Spirit which is perceived by contemplation.
- K. It is impossible to describe such an endless subject in detail. I relate it in brief. (Enumerates various things and states how the Great Spirit is the essence of all)—[X, 12-42].
- A. May I see with my own eyes the transcendental nature and the lordliness of the Great Spirit?
- K. Yes, as you are really devoted. I bestow on you a superior sight. Look at Me, who am the Great spirit and see how myriads of worlds arise from me and get absorbed in Me. (Shows him the cosmic form)—[XI, 1-55].
- A. Lord, a little while ago you told me of the expressionless Great Spirit, which lies beyond both Nature and soul as their cause, and you have just shewn me your supreme cosmic form of a thousand manifestations. Which should men worship?
- K. The worship of either leads to salvation; but the worship of the Great Spirit associated with virtues is easier than that of the expressionless spirit. The former form of worship is favourable to the development of strong devotion to a personal Deity, by which the worshipper proceeds rapidly along the path of spiritual progress and gets deliverance.—[XII, 1-20].
- A. What is deliverance?
- K. Deliverance is the attainment of freedom by the soul from the bonds of *Prakṛiti*. This happens when true knowledge regarding the nature of both arises. (Explains in detail the Sāṃkhya doctrine of *Prakṛiti* and *Purusha*) [XIII, 1-34]. All beings spring from the union of *Prakṛiti* and the superior manifestation of the Great Spirit *i.e.*, the soul. The three virtues of *Prakṛiti* tinge the soul with action and bind it to rebirth. The object of man should be to raise the soul above the three virtues [XIV, 1-27]—to perceive by spiritual discipline and culture that the great tree of creation, with its far-spreading branches, is the result of

the soul's unholy combination with *Prākṛiti* which should be put at end to, as soon as possible. The soul, thus separated from the bonds of *Prākṛiti* should be traced to its ultimate source, the great expressionless existence.—[XV, 1-20].

- A. Who can hope to gain such deliverance and who not ?
- K. Those that are born in surroundings favourable to the growth of the godly virtues (described in detail) and cultivate them by methods laid down in the *Śāstras* can gain deliverance. Those that cultivate demoniac qualities and do not follow the *Śāstras* cannot.—[XVI, 1-24].
- A. And what is the fate of those who worship according to the light within them, without following any sacred books ?
- K. They fare well or ill according to the nature and strength of their devotion—according to the virtues which predominate in them.—[XVI, 1-6]. All acts of life e.g., performing rites, undergoing penances, bestowing gifts, taking food &c. are performed with different feelings and objects by the men subject to each of the three different classes of virtues. If the men who do not follow any books but act according to their own inclinations, are predominated over by the bright or godly virtues and if their practice of rites, penances and charity—the three kinds of action which have never been renounced but all along performed by sages in the holy name of God—proceed from earnest devotion, they will progress in the path of deliverance ; otherwise they go backwards in the path of spiritual culture.—[XVII, 7-28].
- A. Once more, then, kindly tell me for removing what little doubt yet remains, whether rites, penances and acts of charity should be practised by seekers of deliverance or whether all acts should be forsaken.
- K. As I have said already, man should not give up action but only the selfish attachment to action and desire for the fruits thereof. Man should act with the true knowledge of what action is, not with the false belief that it is something proceeding from him. Fruits of acts should not touch him.—[XVIII, 1-12]. (The elements of action are described in detail and it is explained how the various elements of action and various qualities are, like the

virtues of nature, three-fold).—[XVIII, 13-40]. Each caste has got its proper sphere of action. Working in this sphere, man should by constant culture get rid of attachment and desire. When by this means the perfect peace of worklessness has been attained, man should begin self-contemplation. This contemplation will enable man to realize that his existence is touching a supremely sublime and infinite existence. With more and more devoted contemplation this touch will become a closer and closer communion, till at last it will culminate in the complete merging of the dewdrop in the shining ocean. Let Me tell you, then, the great secret, that I am that Great Spirit. Be devoted to Me. I will deliver thee.—[XVIII, 41-78].

After giving the above brief summary, we can only earnestly hope that the charge of being non-systematic made against the Gita will be seen to be not of a very serious character. Indeed when we consider that, as a philosophical system, the Gita reconciles within itself the doctrines of so many different schools with remarkable success and that, as a system of spiritual culture, it is comprehensive enough to include instructions suited to all stages of advancement from the lowest to the highest, we cannot but greatly admire the highly skilful way in which the whole thing has been presented as a well-connected and continuous dialogue.

Section IV.—DATE AND AUTHORSHIP.

The date at or about which the Bhagavad Gītā was written is not definitely known. Many oriental scholars have attempted to solve the problem of fixing the date of this work, but the inadequacy of data continues upto this time to prove an insurmountable obstacle in the way of attaining a complete solution. We propose, without entering into any elaborate discussion on the subject, to offer a few general remarks on the views expressed by the principal scholars who have dealt with the question.

If the Mahābhārata, as we now have it, were an ordinary epic written by one individual at a definite time, then the problem of fixing the date of the Bhagavad Gītā would have been identical with that of determining the age of the Mahābhārata. But the doubts which oriental scholars have always entertained about the condition of production of the Mahābhārata, are now universally recognized to have ripened into a certainty that the great epic was originally started as a nucleus of much smaller size, and has gradually assumed its present form and dimensions by receiving numerous additions from time to time, chiefly in the form of episodes. The nucleus, again, might have embodied in itself some work extant at the time it was written. The question of the date of composition of the Bhagavad Gītā is therefore seen to be one which is absolutely independent of, and uncomplicated with, the bigger question of analyzing the various strata of the Mahābhārata and determining their time. The Gītā may be older than the nucleus of the Mahābhārata having been incorporated by the original author of the Mahābhārata in the nucleus; it may have been written by the author of the nucleus as an integral part of it; or it may be one of the numerous additions which the nucleus has admittedly received from time to time.

Relation between
the Mahābhārata
and the Bhagavad
Gītā as regards
date and author-
ship.

We can, therefore, consider the date of the Gîtâ taken by itself ; and the first point that strikes one on going through a certain portion of the literature on the subject, is the large amount of serious thought and argument which have been wasted* in refuting a view which is not held by any one whose opinions can claim consideration. Some scholars have taken great pains to establish from philosophical and historical considerations, that the verses were not, as alleged in the poem itself, delivered *ex tempore* on the field of Kurukshetra by Krishna while driving the war chariot of Arjun between the contending armies. As if any one seriously maintained that it were so !

The Mahâbhârata is professedly a poetical work. In verses 61-74 of the first Chapter of the work, its nature is clearly laid down as that of a *poem* which embodies instructions in a great variety of subjects. It is not a work every word of which is intended to be taken as historically correct. It abounds in accounts of supernatural incidents like the churning of the ocean and the birth of *Matsya* and *Satyabati*, which defy the credulity of the most imaginative and zealous advocate of orthodoxy. There is accordingly no ground whatever for supposing that the supernatural narrative which connects the Bhagavad Gîtâ with the main body of the Mahâbhârata, is intended to be taken as historically correct. It is meant as nothing more than a beautiful and poetical setting for the philosophical gem, a setting which appeals strongly to the imagination and impresses the teachings of the great work more forcibly on the mind than any historically correct account of its origin could have done.

It has been supposed by some writers on the subject, that the average Hindu believes in the historical truth of the story relating to the origin of the Gîtâ, because he shows great veneration to the work as the utterings of God Himself. If he does not believe that the Lord Himself actually addressed the instructions to Arjun on the battle-field, why does he quote the Bhagavad Gîtâ as *Divine saying*, with earnest and sincere

* See, for example, the Rev. J. Farquhar's tract on the Gîta published by the Young Men's Christian Association.

devotion? The answer to this question has been foreshadowed in the preceding paragraph to a certain extent. It is the extreme grandeur and overpowering beauty of the poetical setting of the *Gītā*, that carries away the speaker in such cases. But on calm and deliberate consideration, every Hindu regards the saying of the *Gītā* as the message of God to man delivered through the inspired writer of the work, and not directly spoken to a warrior on the field of battle.

It is therefore, difficult to understand why any writer should waste energy in refuting the historical accuracy of the account given in the *Mahābhārata* regarding the authorship of the *Gītā* and the date and circumstance of its origin. That account is understood by all impartial readers as poetry and not history; and it is capable of yielding material for historical investigation only indirectly like other poetical works. To arrive at the date of the *Gītā*, one must follow the usual tedious procedure of examining, one by one, the little bits of internal and external evidence which appear relevant to the subject. In the entire absence of historical works in the field of Sanskrit literature, this procedure is the only one that can be adopted in such cases; and the results obtained by it are of value in proportion to the amount of industry and extent of scholarship brought to bear on the subject in collecting data, and the degree of maturity of judgment and absence of bias displayed in drawing conclusions.

As has been stated above however, the examination of internal and external evidences have led different scholars to different conclusions. There are, on the one hand, writers like Telang, who after a careful and elaborate examination of the question come to the conclusion that "the date at which the *Gītā* can have been composed must be earlier than the third century B. C., though it is impossible to say how much earlier;" on the other hand, we have scholars of the stamp of Lorinser, Weber and Lassen who hold that "the *Bhagavad Gītā* was not written before the third century A.C." (Davies, p. 183). That most of the scholars who have written on the subject are men of vast scholarship, indefatigable industry and clear judgment no one can, for a moment, doubt; but all of them cannot be said to have been altogether free from bias, in as much as many of those who lean to a late date, do

The *Mahābhārata* gives no direct clue regarding the date of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Diversity of opinion.

so with the object of establishing that the author of the Bhagavad Gītā "must have been acquainted with the doctrines of the Christian faith", (Lorinser, referred to by Davies, p. 181) while those who, like Telang, push the date far back into the centuries before Christ, apparently do so with the object of making the theory of Christian influence an absurdity.

The chief arguments of those who maintain that the Gītā was

The main arguments regarding the date of composition enumerated.

not written before the third century A. D. and was produced under the influence of christianity* are :—

(1) The Vedas are not regarded by the Gītā as the supreme authority. They are in some places slighted and sneered at. It is unlikely that the Vedas could have been spoken of in that way at a very early period.

(2) There are many parallel passages in the Gītā and the New Testament.

(3) The thoughts contained in the Gītā are of a much higher and purer kind than that of other Hindu religious books, and this probably resulted from a contact of the author with a system more spiritual than the idolatrous Hinduism.

(4) Krishna is regarded in the Gītā as the Supreme Deity. On a consideration of the history of the gradual development of the Krishna cult, this view is seen to be possible only about the advent of the Paurāṇic period of Sanskrit religious literature.

(5) The mythological forms of the Gītā correspond with those of the Purāṇas.

(6) The style and language of the poem point to the third or fourth century A. D. as the date of its composition.

As regards the first point, it is difficult to see how any one acquainted with the origin and progress of the

Attitude of the Bhagavad Gītā towards the Vedas.

Buddhistic movement in India, can fail to see that absolute free-thinking as regards the authority and utility of the Vedas existed in India at a period

much earlier than the third or fourth century A. D. Without going so far as to think, along with Mr. Telang, that the Gītā is antibuddhistic and represents only the first stage of the struggle against the rigid

* Vide the learned note on the subject by J. Davies appended to his translation of the Bhagavad Gītā (Trubner's Oriental Series.)

authority of the Vedas which gradually gathered strength and ultimately culminated in the great upheaval brought on by the teachings of Gautama, an impartial reader can have little hesitation in rejecting the attitude of the Gîtâ towards the Vedas as an evidence of the work having been composed several centuries after the birth of Christ.

As regards the parallel passages we have the authority of such eminent thinkers as Dr. Muir and Dr. Monier Williams that the resemblance between the passages is not greater than what can reasonably be expected in works dealing with the same subject from similar stand-points. Earnest thinkers on a subject which is equally interesting to all, will often think in the same way and there is nothing to wonder at, if the truths flashing on their minds from a common source, find similar expression, in both. The coincidence of thought and language referred to cannot therefore be regarded as affording chronological data of any value.

The statement that the Gîtâ towers above the rest of Hindu theological literature in the loftiness of sentiments, and appears to be the product of a purer influence from outside, is one which is at variance with the fact that almost every doctrine mentioned in the Gîtâ can be traced, in some form or other, to treatises belonging to the various early periods in the history of Sanskrit literature. Here, again, though one may not be prepared to go with Mr. Telang so far as to believe that the Gîtâ represents a cruder and less systematized, and therefore more ancient, stage of the very thoughts which were crystallized and codified later on in the various aphoristic philosophical and other treatises, one can see little difficulty in realizing that the Gîtâ fits in so well with the literature preceding and following it in Sanskrit literature, and has so much in common with such literature, as to make the theory of Christian influence absolutely unnecessary.

The argument in connection with the Krishna cult is far from conclusive. The mere fact that Krishna figures in the Gîtâ cannot bring the date down to the third or fourth century A. D. ; for the name occurs in

Parallel passages in the Bhagavad Gita and the New Testament.

The argument that the Bhagavad Gita does not fit into the rest of Hindu theology.

The Krishna Cult.

works like the *Chhândogya Upanishad* which undoubtedly belong to an earlier period. But much is made of the fact that Krishna is spoken of in the *Gîtâ* as Brahman or God Himself, and it is argued with great force that the divinity of Krishna, as described in the *Gîtâ*, is fatal to all theories regarding its antiquity beyond the date mentioned above. It must however be remembered that though the divinity of Krishna is repeatedly and most emphatically asserted in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, Krishna as described therein does not represent the latest development of the cult as found in the *Purânas*. There is not the slightest reference in the *Gîtâ* to that phase of the Krishna cult which is the chief topic regarding Krishna in Paurânic literature; the ideas which had firmly got hold of the mind of the people in the Pauranic age, are not discernable even in their most rudimentary forms in the pages of the *Gîtâ*. Thus of at least 35 different names by which Krishna is referred to in the *Gîtâ*, not one has any reference to the *Gopikâs* or *Râthâ*. The divinity of Krishna as described in the *Gîtâ* does not therefore at all tend to show the proximity of the date of the work to the Paurânic age. It would perhaps be more rational to assume that superhuman attributes had already commenced to gather round the character of the hero about the time the *Gîtâ* was written, and that the author of the work raised the demigod to the level of an incarnation of the Supreme Being Himself, to make the setting of his poem into the body of the *Mahâbhârata* grander and more impressive.

The similarity of the mythological forms mentioned in the *Gîtâ* with those described in the *Purânas* would have been a valuable source of information, if the *Purânas* themselves had contained nothing having greater antiquity than the period of Indian History to which they give its name. But as the word 'Purâna' itself shews, and as scholars like Dr. Buhler and Telang have held, "there is a good deal in the *Purânas* which must be admitted to be very ancient; while undoubtedly also there is a great deal in them that is very modern." Besides, as it is not maintained by any one that the *Gîtâ* is later than any of the *Purânas* and has adopted their phraseology, the common mythological forms and expressions must have been drawn by the *Gîtâ* from the

Pauranic mythological forms in the Bhagavad Gita.

original ancient source from which the *Purāṇas* themselves borrowed later on.

A consideration of the style and language of the poem in this connection is useful. The language of the *Gītā* certainly shows that the book belongs to a period earlier than that of the classical Sanskrit literature which is characterized by artificiality of diction, inordinate length and number of compounds and a laboured plentitude of figures of speech. But beyond this no further conclusion can be drawn. So far as language is concerned, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Manu Smṛiti* seem to stand on exactly the same footing, the style of the two works being almost exactly similar.

From a study of the versification, however, the *Gītā* would seem to be somewhat older than the Code of Manu. In the whole of Manu's work there is not a single deviation from the rigorous rules of prosody. In the *Bhagavad Gītā* two forms of metre have been used, the *anushtubh* and the *trishubh*, each foot *i. e.*, quarter-verse of which consists of eight and eleven syllables respectively. The *anushtubh* verses of the *Gītā*—and 645 out of the 700 verses are in this metre—are all very regular as regards rules of prosody; but a large number of the *trishubh* verses display great variations from the prescribed standard. If freedom from hard and fast metrical rules is a test of antiquity—and as a matter of fact we find it to be so in Sanskrit literature generally speaking—then the date of the *Gītā* can be reasonably placed a little before the date of *Manu Samhitā*, though it should be stated that in the work of Manu only one metre has been used *viz.*, the *anushtubh*. Here, again, we cannot go quite so far as Telang, who concludes that the versification of the *Gītā* indicates its position as nearly contemporaneous with the Upanishad literature; for the Upanishads abound in instances of complete freedom from the rules of the *anushtubh* as well. But we nevertheless feel sure from considerations of style and versification, that the *Gītā* was sufficiently removed from the classical period of Sanskrit literature to make the third or fourth century A. D., an impossible date of its composition.

On a consideration as far as has been found possible of points, some of which have been briefly referred to above, the *Gītā* seems to us

to have been composed about the first century before the Christian era. The theory that the Gita was composed under Christian influence appears to us to be absolutely untenable, specially as the ideas regarding Godhead and creation, as expounded in the Gitá, are essentially Hindu and totally different from those found in the New Testament.

There are many learned and elaborate commentaries of this great work and translations of it have appeared in almost all European languages.* In English alone there are at least six† excellent translations by Sanskrit scholars of great repute. But the labours of all these translators can hardly be said to have brought the work out of the oriental scholar's library into the mass of general literature to be enjoyed by the public; and the work continues to this day to be beyond the reach of those who have not the time, patience and inclination to follow scholarly discussions on an admittedly abstruse branch of philosophy.

The main object of this publication is to popularize the Gitá and its doctrines as far as practicable; to present before the English speaking nations an accurate rendering of the contents of this remarkable work in a form at once attractive and devoid of technicalities. It is not meant so much for the savant, as for the general reader; for those who are in the thick of worldly occupations, but may yet wish in their leisure hours to know something about the great problems of spirit, duty, afterworld and communion. The pretensions of the volume will therefore be seen to be extremely modest. It does not represent the result of any critical study or original investigation in the field; it does not claim to present before the reader the abstruse

* The chief commentaries in Sanskrit are those [of Sankara, Ananda Giri, Mddhusudan, Hanuman, Sridhar Swami, Baladeva and Gour Govinda Roy. The Greek version of Galanos, the Italian version of Stanisallo Gatti, the French version of Burnouf, the Latin version of Lassen and the German version of Dr. Lorinser are the principal translations in European Languages other than English. (All referred to by Davies in his English translation.)

† The chief English translations are those by Wilkinson, Thomson, Telang (two translations), Davies and Annie Besant. Sir Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial* is a free rendering.

and extremely subtle doctrines discovered in the *Gîtâ* by learned commentators. It aims at being a plain and accurate English translation of the text, verse by verse, as it would be understood by an impartial and intelligent reader. And if its publication will lead, even in a small degree, to a wider knowledge of the contents of the *Gîtâ* amongst English speaking peoples and will cause a larger number of men to think over the sublime subjects dealt with in that work, its object will have been fulfilled.

It is necessary here to say one word of explanation regarding the translation of technical terms. In a work like the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, most of the ideas contained in which are totally foreign to the genius of the English language, there must be many words for which there are no exact English equivalents. In a critical or scholarly translation, intended for purposes of research, it is perhaps best to leave such words in their Sanskrit form, explaining their meaning in notes. But in a translation like the present one, the main object of which is to popularize the subject by presenting it in an attractive form, the retention of a large number of Sanskrit words seemed undesirable; and the English words which come nearest to the significance of the Sanskrit words have therefore been used in such cases. The notes, of course, explain the accurate significance of the Sanskrit terms in the original. To illustrate the above remarks by an example: the word *Brahman* has been frequently translated in this work as 'God', although it is known that the word is really untranslatable, and it is only after *Brahman* is associated with virtues that it becomes *Isvara* or God.

In transliterating Sanskrit words, none of the scholarly systems of transliteration has been strictly followed. The unusual and unfamiliar appearance which those systems give to some common words is objectionable in a work of this kind. The forms in which an Englishman would ordinarily write the words as pronounced by a Sanskritist, are the forms adopted in this work.

The study of the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* and the higher *Upanishads* formed the main occupation of the closing years of Conclusion. the translator's life. Every work was read over and over again and fresh light appeared to dawn with each reading. By and by, he could think or talk of nothing else. The all-pervading, calm and infinite Spirit spoken of in those works seemed to have

absorbed him. Many hours in the morning and evening were spent in solitude—in praying, in chanting hymns and in silent meditation. The external life was also gradually being brought more and more into conformity with the lofty ideals of the *Gītā*, the main features of which are self-control, want of attachment, renunciation of the fruits of action and unswerving devotion.

The present translation is thus the production of an author who, on the one hand, was an ardent and admiring student of the original work and, on the other, combined a vast scholarship of English philosophical and theological literature with a remarkable mastery over the difficulties of English composition. It is a matter of deep regret that he could not finish the final revision of the work which now appears before the public as a posthumous publication. He is also not responsible for the notes. But the instructions he gave have been faithfully followed both as regards revision of the text and compilation of the notes.

The first three books of the translation are in iambic tetrametre and the rest is iambic pentametre. Monotony of versification has therefore been inevitable ; but variations have been introduced as far as practicable by inserting occasional feet of other kinds.

The notes are intended to explain allusions and technical terms and to shew the train of reasoning. They have been made as few as possible. The argument at the beginning of each book contains its substance in simple language. Nowhere has any attempt been made to grapple with subtle and intricate philosophical questions. If any reader becomes interested in such questions and desirous of entering on a systematic study of the principles of Hindu philosophy, he will have no difficulty in selecting a fairly large number of suitable English works from the productions of classical workers in the field of Sanskrit literature.

In spite of all the care taken by the printer, a few typographical errors have crept into the body of the work. It is hoped that such errors are not numerous and as they are such as the reader can himself easily correct, a table of errata is not given.

THE BHAGAVAD GITA.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK I.

— 00 —

Sanjay relates to Dhritaráshtira the following account of the battle of Kurukshetra : Both the armies being arrayed in battle order and ready to engage in action, Duryodhan enumerates for the information of Drona, his preceptor and general, the heroes taking part on each side. The martial band then strikes up. Arjun next appears on the scene in a car, Krishna acting as his charioteer. He requests Krishna to place the car between the two armies for a while so that he may survey them well. Krishna does so. Arjun sees that it is with his own relatives and friends that he has to fight. His heart revolts at the idea of killing his own people and he eloquently describes to Krishna the evil effects of such a sinful course. He then throws aside his weapons and refuses to fight.

—

THE BHAGAVAD GITÁ.

— 00 —

BOOK I.

THE DEJECTION OF ARJUN.



Dhritarāshtra—

In Kurukshetra's sacred field,
Desirous all their arms to wield,
Of Pándu's sons the troops, I pray,
And mine did what? O Sanjay, say.

2.

Sanjay—

King Duryodhan surveyed with care
The Pándav troops located there ;
Then went to his preceptor's¹ side
And thus he spoke with humbled pride².

3.

“ Look here, my lord, how big in size
The Pándavs' force !—that Draupad³ wise,
Thy pupil, hath arrayed so nice
In battle order all precise.

4-6.

Great archers fierce like Arjun, Bheem,
Are here, who do unrivalled seem ;

1. Drona, the preceptor of the Kurus and Pándavas alike (see introduction) was one of Duryodhan's generals in the war.

2. Duryodhan felt from the beginning that the Pándavas were superior to him in strength. See stanza 10 below.

3. Draupad *i.e.*, the son of Drupad. His name was Dhristadyumna.

Of mighty car, King Drupad⁴ old,
 Virát⁵ and Yuyudhán⁶ so bold ;
 And Dhristaketu,⁷ Chekitan,⁸
 The king of Kási⁹—mighty man ;
 And Purujit¹⁰ of Kuntibhoj,¹¹
 Saubhadra,¹² Saibya,¹³ Uttamouj¹⁴ ;
 Yudhámanyu¹⁵ of courage rare,
 And sons¹⁶ of Drupad's daughter fair ;—
 All these are men of mighty car,¹⁷
 Whose fame hath travelled near and far.

4. Drupad, king of Pánehál, was father-in-law of the Pándavas. For explanation of the phrase 'of mighty car' see 17 below.

5. Virát was the ruler of the Matsya kingdom. His daughter Uttará was married to Arjun's son Abhimanyu.

6. Ynyudhán was better known as Sátyaki. He was a prince of the Yadu family and acted on many occasions as Krishna's charioteer.

7. Dhristaketu was the prince of Chedi. He was placed on the throne by the Pándavas after his father Sisupála was killed by Krishna during the *Rájsuya* ceremony of king Yudhisthir.

8. Chekitán was a prince of the Brishni race.

9. The royal houses of Kási and Hastinápúr were related, the mothers of Dhritaráshttra and Pándu being princesses of the house of Kási.

10. Purujit was the foster-father of Kunti, the mother of Yudhisthir.

11. Kuntibhoj was the name of Purujit's principality.

12. Saubhadra, better known as Abhimanyu, was the son of of Subhadrá, Krishna's sister married to Arjun.

13. Saibya was a prince of the Sibi race.

14. Uttamouj was a prince of the Brishni race.

15. Yudhámanyu was also a prince of the Brishni race.

16. Drupad's daughter *i.e.*, Draupadi, the common wife of the five Pándava brothers. She had one son by each of the brothers *viz.* Pratibindhya, Sutasom, Srutakarna, Satáneek and Sutasen by Yudhisthir, Bhim, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev respectively.

17. A man of mighty car or Maháratha in Hindu military vocabulary is a hero who can singly match ten thousand *i.e.*, a large number of archers.

7.

On our side too, O twice-born¹⁸ best !
 Now thee I tell of those that rest ;
 The leaders of my army chief
 By name I count for thy belief.

8.

Thyself and Bhishma¹⁹ grandsire old,
 Vikarna,²⁰ Karna,²¹ Kripa²² bold,
 Somdatta's son,²³ Jayadrath²⁴ known
 And Asvathámá²⁵ who's thine own.

9

And many more of able parts
 Well skilled in war, adept in darts,
 Have made up all, in this our strife,
 Their minds, to win or lose their life.

18. The term 'dwija' used in the original means 'twice-born' and includes the Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya castes, but is usually applied to Brahmans only. These castes are supposed to be born twice *viz.*, once physically and for the second time spiritually at the time of religious initiation. Men of lower castes *i. e.*, sudras on the other hand are not initiated to religious practices and are therefore 'once-born.' Drona being a Brahman is addressed by his pupil Duryodhan as the best amongst the twice-born.

19. Bhishma was the half-brother of, Bichitrabirya the common grandfather of the Kauravas and the Pándavas (see introduction.)

20. Vikarna was one of Duryodhan's brothers.

21. Karna was the chief adviser and supporter of Duryodhan. He was really born of Kunti the mother of the Arjun during her maidenhood by the grace of the Sun-god, but was brought up by Adhiratha and his wife Rádha of the Suta caste whom he knew to be his parents. His mysterious birth was unknown to him till Kunti herself told him all, to win him over to the side of the Pándavas.

22. Kripa was born of the Rishi or Sage named Gautama. His sister Kripí was Drona's wife.

23. The name of Somadatta's son was Bhurisrabá. He was a great warrior.

24. Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu, was the husband of Duryodhan's only sister Duhsalá.

25. Asvathámá was the son of Drona and his wife Kripí.

THE BHAGAVAD GITA.

10.

In spite of these our force doth seem
Less fit to fight than that of Bheem ;
E'en though our hardy soldiers stand
All under Bhishma's own command.

11.

Our leader thus, yon Bhishma brave,
Each in his post do try to save ;
At openings of arrays let all,
Repel the foe or dying fall.²⁶

12.

This said, the Kuru grandsire old²⁷
To please the king a hundred fold
Roared lion-like and conch-shell blew
Aloud as no man ever knew.

13.

Directly then the martial band—
The conch, the trumpet, *panab*²⁸ grand,
Loud *anak*²⁹ too and cowface³⁰ tall,
Were struck in wild confusion all.

14.

Soon after on a mighty car
With milkwhite horses that were far

26. The old Hindu method of fighting consisted in arranging the troops in a vast array or *byuha* in which the leader occupied a prominent position. Each party tried to break the array of the other and attack its leader.

27. This refers to Bhishma, the leader of the Kaurav army, who was Duryodhan's granduncle. The king referred to in the next line of the text is of course Duryodhan.

28. The instrument now known in Bengal as *Mádal*—a sort of flat drum.

29. The huge drums now known in Bengal as *Dhák* or tom-tom.

30. Horns resembling the face of cows.

Beyond compare, came Mádhav³¹ there
And Pándav,³² blowing conch-shells fair.

15-16.

The Lord his Páñchajanya³³ famed,
And Arjun his, Dev-datta named ;
Fierce Bheem his giant, Paundra blows ;
The sound of Anant-vijay flows
From breath of Kuntí's son, the just,
King Yudhisthir the man of trust ;
Nakul and Sahadev did charge
The Sughosh and Man'pushpak large.

17-19.

And Kási's king³⁴—the archer free—
The man of great car, Shikhandi ;³⁵
Virát³⁶ and Dhristadyumna³⁷ great,
And Sátyaki,³⁸ o'er vict'ry's mate ;
Bold Drupad³⁹ with his grandsons famed,
Young Abhiman,⁴⁰ the mighty named ;—
All lords of earth their conch-shells blew

31. Mádhav is another name of Krishna, the great prince of Dwarka. (See introduction.)

32. The term Pándav here refers to Arjun.

33. The lord Krishna blew his conch which was named Páñchajanya. Similarly the conchs of the five Pándava brothers viz., Arjun, Bheem, Yudhisthir, Nakul and Sahadev were respectively named Devadatta, Paundra, Anant-vijay, Sughosh and Manipushpak as the text clearly shews.

34. See note 9 above.

35. Shikhandi was a son of Drupad and brother of Dhristadyumna. He was previously a female but was miraculously changed into a man. When all others failed, Shikhandi succeeded in felling the invincible Bhishma in war. The reason of his success was that Bhishma would not return the blows of one who had once been a woman.

36. See note 5 above.

37. See note 3 above.

38. Also called Yuyudhán. See note 6 above.

39. See notes 4 and 16 above.

40. See note 12 above.

Of which the sound tremendous grew,
And did to heaven and earth impart
A noise that rent the Kauravs' heart.

20.

Then Arjun saw the foe arrayed
In battle; and his bow he weighed
To throw his pointed darts; when lo!
To Krishna's ears these words did flow:—

21.

"Do keep my car, Achyut,⁴¹ pray thee,
'Tween both the armies while I see
The men arrayed here wishing war,
And judge them closely as they are.

22-23.

Do halt, till I the heroes know
Who fight me from amongst the foe;
Till all the hostile bands survey
That have become an easy prey
To Dhártaśhtra's⁴² wile and stood
In field resolved to do him good."

24-25.

While thus he⁴³ spoke, the Lord,⁴⁴ your grace,⁴⁵
'Tween armies two the car did place
In front of Drona, Bhishma both
And all the kings; and then he quoth
"Look yonder, Pártha,⁴⁶ and behold
The Kurus grouped in bands untold."

41. Achyuta is another name of Krishna.

42. Dhártaśhtra means son of Dhritarāshtra, here Duryodhan in particular.

43. This pronoun stands for Arjun.

44. The Lord *i. e.*, Krishna.

45. This is Sanjay's address to Dhritarāshtra.

46. Pártha is another name of Arjun; literally the son of Prithā or Kuntī, Arjun's mother.

26.

And Arjun there assembled saw
 His uncles, cousins, sires-in-law
 And grandsires, sires, preceptors, sons,
 With children's children—dearest ones—
 And friends and comrades in that field ;—
 All bent to conquer, none to yield.

27.

Thus finding all his friends and clan,
 To melt the Pándav's heart began ;
 Dejected then, with feeling speech
 He strove to such a war impeach.

28-29.

And said ;—“ When I, O Krishna dear !
 Behold our own assembled here
 To fight with us, my skin grows hot,
 My mouth gets dry at every thought,
 My limbs do shake, my hair doth stand
 Erect and Gándiv⁴⁷ leaves my hand.

30.

I cannot rest, O Keshav⁴⁸ dear ;
 My mind doth wander far and near ;
 The omens sure, methinks I see
 In this of dire calamity.

31.

No conquest, Krishna, seek I bright
 Nor happiness nor monarch's right ;
 No good in battle fierce I ken
 In killing friends and our own men.

32-34.

Of Kingdoms, sensuous joys profuse
 Or life itself, say what's the use

47. Gándiv was the name of Arjun's famous bow.

48. Keshav is another name of Krishna.

When they themselves, Govinda⁴⁹ fair,
 For whom men all possessions care,
 When they in war are standing nigh
 At any time to fall and die.
 Instructors, grandsires hoary grown,
 And these our sons and grandsons own,
 And these who fathers, brothers stand
 In law, these kin that love demand,
 I loathe to slay though kill they me ;
 I should not sure their murd'rer be.

35.

What peace shall we, Jonárdan,⁵⁰ gain
 E'en if we three-fold⁵¹ world's domain
 Do earn—aside a little land—
 By killing all Dhrit'ráshttra's band ?

36.

If these our foes by us be killed,
 Our souls with sin will sure be filled ;
 'Tisn't meet for us to slaughter then
 The Dhártaráshttras⁵² and their men.

37.

How can we, Mádhav,⁵³ happy be
 By killing our own family ?
 Though duped by avaricious mind,
 The ill that lies *they*⁵⁴ do not find
 In death and loss of one's own clan
 And mischief done to friendly man ;—

49. Govinda is another name of Krishna.

50. Jonárdan is another name of Krishna, derived from his having slain the demon Jana.

51. The universe according to Hindu mythology consists of three regions of which this world inhabited by men is the middle one. Above is *swarga* or heaven the abode of *devas* who are superior beings, friendly to man. Below is *Pátal* the residence of *asuras* and *Nágas*, beings hostile to mankind.

52. Dhártaráshttras *i. e.*, the sons of Dhritaráshttra.

53. Mádhav is another name for Krishna ; see note 31 above.

54. They *i. e.*, Duryodhan and his party.

38.

Yet why not *we* who rightly see
The harm that loss of family
Involves, desist from such a course
That sin begets and brings remorse ?

39.

Impov'rish'd race⁵⁵ so often leads
To want of good and pious deeds
Of olden days—a house's pride ;
And virtue gone doth sin bestride.

40.

A house devoid of pious tone
Degrades the females from the throne
Of chastity and moral force—
Of hybrid birth the fruitful source.

41.

The bastards for their parents pave
The way to the infernal wave ;
For all ancestors do the same
And all that ever bore the name.
Of hybrids such the fathers dead
In want of water and of bread⁵⁶
Do roam in hell—ah, cruel fate—
Regretting their unenvied state.

42.

Thus, friend, the men who kill their kin
And friends in war, are plunged in sin ;—

55. In verses 39-41 Arjun shews the various evil effects of an extensive slaughter of relatives. In verses 42-43 the same thing is repeated in a slightly different way.

56. This is a reference to the Hindu *Sradha* ceremony. Every orthodox Hindu is required to offer periodically rice-cakes, water &c., for the satisfaction of his dead ancestors. The offerings are popularly supposed to reach the ancestors in the after world. Those that leave no legitimate children do not get these offerings after death and consequently suffer.

Dire sin—which bastard sons begets
And ways of race and caste upsets.

43.

And racial high traditions gone,
Men reckless grow by vices drawn ;
And live in hell for e'er 'tis said,
Thus being for their sins repaid.

44.

Alas, to do a sinful act
Bent are we all—who doubts the fact?—
When we from greed of throne are led
The blood that is our own to shed.

45.

Should me, inactive, bare of arms
The Dhártaráshtras⁵⁷ kill, or harms
Inflict with darts, it would for me
A better course than battle be."

46.

And Arjun in that field of war
Thus saying, on his mighty car,
Distressed he sat and pensive grew,
While shafts and bow away he threw.

END OF BOOK I.

57. The sons of Dhritarashtra and their party.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK II.

— ७७ —

Krishna tries to rouse Arjun up to action by reproaching his weakness. But Arjun is deeply convinced of the sin and impropriety of killing his own friends and relatives and he would not fight. Krishna now launches into a metaphysical disquisition, explaining matters to Arjun in a true philosophical light.

(1) In the first place he explains the immortality of the soul and shews that death is nothing but a slight change of condition for which no wise man should mourn.

(2) In the second place he urges that as a member of the *Kshatriya* or warrior caste, Arjun should regard lawful war as a duty. To shrink from a righteous war because it would result in death of men is foolish and disgraceful for him.

(3) In the third place he explains that the motive of any action determines whether it is sinful or not. Those that rest in Karma Yoga *i. e.*, perform actions from a pure sense of duty, without attachment or anxiety for the result, cannot be touched by sin. Arjun need not therefore be afraid that any sin will result from the war, if he undertakes it in a proper spirit.

Arjun thereupon enquires the signs by which a man resting in Karma Yoga may be known and Krishna describes that pure and holy state of true wisdom. He also explains that such true wisdom can be attained by controlling the passions and the senses and not by performing actions and rituals described in the vedas and other works.

BOOK II.

— 00 —

SÁMKHYA YOGA OR COMMUNION BY WISDOM.

*

To Arjun then, whose constant sighs,
Dejected heart and tearful eyes
Cast gloom around, did Krishna say
These words in his own graceful way.

2.

“ Whence this, my friend, the timid thought,
Unaryan¹ most, with meanness fraught,
Unheavenly too—infamous far—
That shewest thou at time of war ?

3.

Thou Pártha,² shalt no coward be ;
Such weakness, sure, is not for thee.
Do thou arise then, O my dear,
Forego thy doubts and abject fear.”

4.

To whom thus Arjun ;—“ Why should I,
The strength of Drona, Bhishma try
In battle,—wound and kill them pray ?
Both worshipful to me are they.

1. From the earliest historical times the population of India has consisted of two broad divisions *viz.*, the Aryans who are said to have originally migrated from Central Asia and the non-Aryans or aborigenes. The former who are more civilized, look down upon the latter who are still in a very backward condition and the term ‘un-aryan’ has always been a term of reproach amongst the Aryan races of India.

2. See note 46, Book I.

5.

'Tis better far to beg and eat,
 Than teachers great in war defeat
 And kill ; such murd'ers here enjoy,
 As masters honoured do destroy,
 Foul pleasures that are washed in gore
 And earn misfortune ever more.

6.

Nor do I know if conquest bright
 Or dire defeat, in this our fight,
 Would better be for us ; when they
 Whose death is sure to take away
 All zest of life from us, there are
 Dhrit'râshtra's sons, in front, for war.

7.

In wisdom poor, confounded, I
 Of virtue void, do not descry
 What duty is ; O teach Thou me³—
 Disciple Thine ;—I ask of thee
 What best to do for one so weak ;
 Protection Thine for this I seek.

8.

Distressing thoughts arising hence⁴
 That will my senses burn intense
 Shake how I off ? Although I get
 Vast wealth on earth or though am set
 To rule o'er gods, their king on high,
 Nay even then no way descry."

3. Arjun knew and believed in the divine nature of Krishna.
 (See introduction.)

4. From the slaughter of friends and relatives.

9.

The fire of foes,⁵ Gudákes⁶ best,
The Lord of Senses⁷ thus addressed ;
And then did add " I will not fight ;"
So saying ceased to speak outright.

10.

Then smiling soft, as if in joke,
'Tween armies two Sree Krishna⁸ spoke
To Arjun, who depressed in mood
Was there ; do hear, O Bhárat good.⁹

11.

"O'ercome¹⁰ art thou with deep regret
For those that shouldn't be mourned ;"¹¹ dost yet
Philosophize as do the wise ;
They do not care who lives or dies.¹²

5. " Fire of foes" is a very honourable epithet of kings and warriors in Sanskrit.

6. Gudákes is another name of Arjun.

7. Krishna is frequently referred to as " the Lord of senses."

8. The prefix " Sree" is frequently used before proper names to denote respect. Sree Krishna is a little more formal than Krishna.

9. Bhárat *i. e.*, a descendant of king Bharat of the Lunar dynasty. This is Sanjay's address to Dhritaráshtra.

10. From this stanza the philosophical portion of the Bhagavad-Gitá begins. The commentaries of Sankara and some other commentators begin from this stanza.

11. That is, for those who are about to fall in battle.

12. This is half sarcastic. " You, Arjun" says Krishna " speak like a sage but act like a fool."

12.

'Tis not that ever was I nought,¹³
 Nor thou, nor these together brought
 The lords of men ;—nor is it right,
 That nothingness can be our plight.

13.

As man in this corporeal frame
 Has boyhood, youth and age,—the same¹⁴
 He gets a body new ;¹⁵ the wise
 In this see nought to cause surprise.

14.

O Kunti's son, our senses touch¹⁶
 Their objects, and from contacts such
 Grow feelings ; from which all sustain
 Their chill and heat—their pleasure, pain ;

13. Krishna proceeds to shew why the impending death of the assembled warriors should not be mourned, by explaining the immortality of the spirit.

The stanza should be paraphrased thus : It is not a fact that at any time I did not exist *i. e.*, my spirit is existing through all the past ages. Similarly it is not a fact that at any time you or these assembled warriors did not exist. Again it is not a fact that any one of us can become nothing in the future.

The round about but forcible method of expression used in the original, has been imitated in the translation.

14. In the same way.

15. That is, by death. The word 'body' need not be taken in the restricted sense of a human body, but may mean any form of clothing of the spirit.

16. Arjun may say "Yes, the spirit is eternal and cannot die. But I mourn not for the impending death of these men but at the thought of my separation from them." This stanza is a reply to such an objection. Worldly pleasure and pain, like heat and cold, are the result of certain objects meeting our senses and are thus bound to be transient. It is foolish to mourn when one of such contacts is inevitably broken.

Short-lived these contacts come and go ;
O Bhárat,¹⁷ do thou bear them so.

15.

O best of men, those people gain,
To whom such contacts¹⁸ give no pain,
Immortal life ; they always kiss
With equal zest both woe and bliss.

16.

From want,¹⁹ existence²⁰ cannot grow,
And what exists can never know
Want absolute ;²¹ of both these, friend,
Philosophers have seen the end.²²

17.

The spirit²³ that pervades this all,
Immortal is and cannot fall ;
No one to it can put an end,
The wasteless to destruction send.

17. See note 9 Book II. But here the word is addressed by Krishna to Arjun.

18. Contacts of senses with their objects.

19. Want *i. e.*, nothingness.

20. Existence *i. e.*, something which has an existence.

21. In this stanza, a general doctrine is laid down to shew that the spirit can afford to be indifferent to worldly pleasure and pain, as advised in the two preceding stanzas. It need not be afraid of being crushed or annihilated. The comprehensiveness of the doctrine here laid down is really amazing. It enunciates on the one hand, the modern theories of conservation of matter and energy and on the other, the doctrine of eternity of the soul—the bases of both our material and spiritual sciences.

22. That is, wise men have seen that existence always remains existence and want always remains want.

23. Stanzas 17-30 consist of a lucid exposition of the immortality of the soul.

18.

The bodies have their death ; but, friend,
That which is bodied²⁴ knows no end—
Changeless, immeasurable, far
Beyond compare ;—so go to war.

19.

Who thinks this spirit ever slays,
Or's killed by others, sure betrays
A head with serious errors fraught ;
None kills it nor 'tis killed by aught.

20.

Nor hath it birth, nor doth it die,
Nor once existing ever try
A second being,—changeless sure,
Unborn, eternal, always pure,
Bestowed with everlasting breath,—
Which dies not with the body's death.

21.

Who knows this human spirit strange
Quite free from death and waste and change—
Whom can he slay ? How can he slay
Or get one slain ? O Pártha,²⁵ say.

22.

As man doth ragged vests forego
And put on new apparel, so

24. That which is bodied is the spirit.

25. See note 46, Book I.

By throwing off the worn out frame
 It²⁶ goes to others all the same ;
 In body new it²⁶ lives once more—
 A being fresh in flesh and gore.

23.

Arms cut it²⁶ not, nor fire doth burn,
 Nor waters wet, nor in their turn
 The airs evaporate it,²⁶ friend ;
 It knows no waste, nor birth, nor end.

24.

For changeless 'tis²⁶ by nature sure,
 Eternal, all pervading, pure ;—
 A thing which can't, howe'er you try,
 Be cut or burnt, made wet or dry.

25.

Beyond expression, thought and change
 'Tis²⁶ said to be—existence strange !
 Who knows it²⁶ once can ne'er forget,
 'Tis²⁶ not an object of regret.

26.

Shouldst thou assume 'tis²⁶ daily born,²⁷
 And suffers death each eve and morn,
 E'en then, thou strong of arms, canst see,
 Aggrieved for it²⁶ one should not be.

26. The spirit.

27. That is, if you think that souls are born as bodies are born every day and die &c. Of course this assumption is quite contrary to the doctrine of the Gita. But Krishna, being very eager to remove Arjun's grief says that even if the soul be supposed to undergo change with the birth and death of the body, one should not grieve for it. The reason is stated in the next verse which lays down in clear terms the doctrine of transmigration of the soul. Absolute death of the spirit or annihilation is not here contemplated.

27.

The born are sure to die, the dead
 As sure to future births are led ;
 Fixed thus the lot of man ; wherefore
 Thou, sir, shouldst grieve for man no more.

28.

All beings are formless first and last,
 The middle only gives them cast ;²⁸
 When all must run this usual course,
 I fail to see what brings remorse.

29.

Few²⁹ see this wondrous spirit here,
 Few speak of it and few do hear ;
 And few again that see it so
 Or speak or hear, its nature know.

30.

This changeless soul, O Bhárat dear !
 Of vile destruction always clear
 Enlivens bodies all ; and so
 For friend or foe, no grief thou show.

28. But why should we not grieve for the (assumed) death of the soul, even if we know that after death it will have a fresh birth? Because the question is then really one of death of the body only. Bodies are formed out of nature and after death they merge into nature. This is inevitable. In the brief interval between birth and death they find expression as in a dream. Nothing is lost; what remained in nature continues to remain in nature. So there should be no grief.

29. If as stated in the last stanza we should not grieve for man's death, then why do even so called wise men mourn? Because they do not know what spirit is. That knowledge is possessed by few. This stanza emphasizes the rarity of true spiritual knowledge.

31.

The duty³⁰ too, of Kshetris think ;
 As such from war thou canst not shrink ;
 Of things desired by them that are
 None better than a lawful war.

32.

As heaven's open gates appear
 Such wars unsought, O Pârtha dear !
 Thrice blest are those of kingly race,
 That get the chance to these embrace.

33.

Shouldst thou forego this sacred war,
 Then thou wouldst fail in duty ; mar
 For ever thy good name, and be
 Filled with black sin of worst degree.

34.

Shall men thy evil name proclaim
 Unending ?—What than loss of fame .
 A harder lot can be ? In faith,
 For powerful souls 'tis worse than death.

35.

Great heroes 'mongst themselves will say
 That thou from field hast run away³¹
 Through fear ;—thou honoured now by all,
 In their esteem wilt hopeless fall.

30. Here begins the second portion of Krishna's speech (see argument). Kshatriya or Kshetri is the second of the four main Hindu castes. Kings and warriors belong to this caste. The duty of Kshetris is to fight in the cause of justice and humanity.

31. To run away from battle is the worst disgrace for a Kshatriya. On the other hand a Kshatriya who falls in battle is supposed to gain heaven at once.

36.

Thy foes of thee shall evil talk
 Prolific, and shall openly mock
 Thy power—now dreaded most—and hiss ;
 What greater curse is there than this ?

37.

If killed in war, you heaven gain,
 If victor, get earth's wide domain ;
 So rise, O rise, fair Kunti's son,
 Be firm—nor try the fight to shun.

38.

Regarding bliss and woe the same,
 And gain or loss, and victor's name
 Or that of vanquished foe, do fight ;
 Thus sins avoid by acting right.

39.

Explained have I,³² how man, if he
 Has real knowledge, can be free
 From sin or such delusion false,
 As thee, my friend, here now enthralls ;
 Now hear the means that doth secure
 That end ; do make your motives pure
 By constant culture ; that will rend
 The actions' bonds, that bind thee, friend.

32. Here begins the third portion of Krishna's speech (See argument). It has been explained above that if a man knows the real nature of the spirit *viz.*, that it is immortal and unchangeable, he cannot be grieved at the death of his relatives or at any other calamity. A man who has gained that knowledge is said to have attained Samkhya-yoga or Jnana-yoga *i. e.*, communion of knowledge. But to attain the high state of Jnana-yoga is difficult, and for gaining it one has to practice, in the first instance, Karma-yoga which aims at making the motives of action pure by constant self-culture. This method of Karma-yoga or communion of action is described in the following verses. Any high state of spiritual progress is called 'communion' because by attaining it, the human spirit approaches perfection in a particular direction and becomes joined, as it were, to the Supreme Spirit.

40.

This means³³ to follow if you mind,
 Then sure its merit soon will find ;
 Abortive starts in wisdom here
 Are none,³⁴ no sudden fall to fear ;
 Of culture such the smallest trace,
 Doth from the mind great fears efface.

41.

O Kuru's³⁵ son, the wisdom sure
 Of those that act from motive pure
 Of duty—follows e'er the same
 One principle, one holy aim ;
 But men who wallow in the mire
 Of worldliness, act from desire
 Which grows and goes through every phase,
 Branched off at last a thousand ways.

42-44.

Those men that vedic texts³⁶ obey
 Implicit, and O Pártha, say

33. The means *vis.*, of Karma-yoga or communion of action. This consists, as has been stated above, in purifying the motives of action by constant self-culture, with a view to get rid of worldly desires and passions.

34. Krishna here contrasts Karma-yoga with the ritualistic methods of purifying one's self described in the Vedas. In the case of the latter a single mistake or omission in the details of a process nullifies the whole thing. In the rational method of Karma-yoga there is no such sudden fall. The more one cultures one's self the more one approaches perfection. Advancement once secured is not liable to be suddenly lost.

35. The epithet 'Kuru's son or descendant' though usually restricted to denote Duryodhan and his brothers, is sometimes applied to the Pándavas as well. Here Krishna addresses Arjun as 'Kuru's son.'

36. Krishna openly denounces the ritualistic vedic ceremonies and holds that man is saved not by performing rituals and sacrifices but only by self-knowledge and spiritual culture.

' There nothing is save what is taught
 In these our books, with blessings fraught,'
 Unknowing are—a tempted³⁷ band,
 Heaven-thirsty ;³⁸ these deliver grand
 And flowery speech which teach of birth³⁹
 And fruits of action⁴⁰ done on earth ;
 And how by various rituals done
 Wealth power and worldly joys are won.
 Deceived are they by doctrines vain,
 And strive for pleasure, wealth and gain.
 Their wisdom sure can never stand
 On action's true communion⁴¹ grand.

37. Tempted by various desires.

38. In the vedas there are descriptions of various rites and ceremonies which, if properly performed, secure for the doer residence in heaven for some ages. The heaven here contemplated is a locality inhabited by immortal beings who are surrounded by every material comfort and luxury. Those that seek such a heaven as this by performing vedic rites are regarded by Krishna as working unworthily for an unworthy object. The proper work for man is to seek salvation and the proper means for this is to practise spiritual culture and acquire self-knowledge.

39. Teach the method by which future birth in very favourable conditions may be secured. This is in contrast to the teachings of Krishna's yoga-system which secures, not good future births, but salvation *i. e.*, want of future births altogether.

40. This is contrary to Krishna's yoga-system which teaches how to act from a pure sense of duty without any desire or attachment for the fruits of action.

41. Action's communion *i. e.*, karma-yoga. This, as has been explained above, is the high state of spiritual culture in which all action is done from a pure sense of duty.

45.

The subjects of the veds maintain
The three-fold⁴² virtues ; do thou gain
The state, my friend, without the three,
For e'er from pain and pleasure free.⁴³
All tranquil let thy spirit lie,
For what thou hast not never sigh,
Nor labour to protect thine own ;
In spirit thou be fully grown.

46.

As in a country flooded o'er
One needs the tanks or wells no more,
But gets whene'er there is demand
The limpid current near at hand ;
So, friend, the Bráhmaṇ who hath found
The bliss of knowledge,⁴⁴ is not bound

42. The three kinds of quality of man's inner nature according to some systems of Sanskrit philosophy are *satwa*, *rajas* and *tamas* which may be roughly translated as pure, forcing and dark respectively. Virtues which favour spiritual progress *e. g.*, devotion to truth and knowledge are of the first kind ; those which force men to action *e. g.*, desire of fame, pride &c., are of the second kind ; and those which drag the mind down to sin and darkness *e. g.*, lust, avarice &c., are of the third kind. So long as a man works with some desire or motive he is coloured by these virtues. But when he attains karma-yoga and works not from any desire but from a pure sense of duty he rises above them. The vedas prescribe various rites for attaining definite objects *e. g.*, gaining heaven &c.—good and noble objects it is true, but still some *desired* objects. So a man following the vedas, works from desire and is therefore subject to the threefold virtues. But a man who follows karma-yoga, works from a pure sense of duty without attachment for any object or end and he is therefore free from all virtues.

43. A man who is above worldly joy and sorrow and who being devoid of desire and attachment leads a calm spiritual life, is above the threefold virtues.

44. Who has attained karma-yoga and thus obtained true knowledge. See note 29 above.

To vedas all⁴⁵ ;—he doth not care,
To learn the trifling topics there.

47.

Thy sole concern with actions be,
Their fruits may never trouble thee !
Ne'er act attached for result's sake,
But acts themselves thou ne'er forsake.

48.

Without attachment do thou work
On God resigned, acts never shirk ;
Success, reverse, regard the same,
For sameness⁴⁸ is communion's name.

49.

The acts that spring from wisdom pure
O friend, than those are better sure
That follow from desire ; know this,
And look to wisdom⁴⁷ thou for bliss.
Let acts all flow from wisdom's root,
For mean are they that work for fruit.⁴⁹

50.

The wise one here⁴⁶ doth never know
This good, that bad ; this joy that woe ;

45. The ritualistic portion of the four vedas *viz.*, Rik, Yajus, Sâman and Atharvan are here referred to. The idea is that when a man has, by karma-yoga, attained the means of salvation, he does not care to gain any meaner happiness *e. g.* residence in heaven, by performing vedic rites and ceremonies.

46. When a man has cultured his inner nature to such an extent that he is not disturbed by the joy of success or the sorrow of failure, he is fit for communion with the God-spirit. This communion takes place when all the faculties of a man are withdrawn from external objects and centred on the spirit.

47. The wisdom attained by Karma Yoga *i. e.*, the conviction that it is best to work from a pure sense of duty, and not for attaining any particular object.

48. That is for selfish attachment to the object aimed at.

49. On earth ; in this life.

Hence practise wisdom thou, be wise ;
From skill in acts doth Yog⁵⁰ arise.

51.

Of fruits regardless wont to be,⁵¹
From chains of birth⁵² for ever free,
The learned joined to wisdom gain
A state diseaseless,⁵³ free from pain.

52.

When wisdom thine, serene will shine
Above delusions—me and mine⁵⁴—
Then only wilt thou cease to care
For acts and rites, the fruits they bear ;—
Which are in various *śāstras* taught,
Some known to you and others not.

53.

When wisdom thine will steady lie
Unmoved in God, not ruffled by
The *śāstric* texts diverse, thy share
Will then be deep communion rare."

50. Yoga or yog is communion with the God-spirit. The practice of doing work in a certain way *i. e.*, from a pure sense of duty, brings the mind to a condition fit for communion.

51. Accustomed to be regardless of the fruits of actions done.

52. According to some systems of Hindu philosophy a man has to be reborn to reap the fruits of his actions in this life. But if by Karma Yog a man acts from a pure sense of duty and is not concerned with the fruits of his action, he is not responsible for them and thus gets free from re-birth.

53. Free from disturbing influences.

54. The delusions under which man thinks "this body is myself and my earthly possessions are really mine own." The truth is that the body is not one's self and that nothing in the world really belongs to any one but God.

The word *śāstra* the plural of which occurs in the fifth line of this verse means sacred books. *Śāstric* in verse 53 is the adjective from *śāstra*.

54.

And Arjun said " O Kesav mine,
Of settled wisdom what's the sign—
Of men in grave communion, pray ?
What words, if aught, the settled say ?
Rest they whereon and how do go ?
Truths such as these, fain would I know."

55.

The Lord replied—" When one foregoes
All mind's desires and, Pârtha, knows
Contentment in himself installed,
Of knowledge settled is he called.

56.

A man unshaken in sorrows dire,
In pleasures all without desire,
From love⁵⁵ and fear and anger free
A man of settled wisdom he.

57.

One who to all attachments dead,
Is not by good or evil⁵⁶ led
To bless or curse who does, hath got
To ground secure one's wisdom brought.

58.

When senses from their objects⁵⁷ all
Like turtle's limbs one can recall⁵⁸

55. Attachment to worldly things.

56. Good or evil done to him.

57. The things on which they fall ; *e. g.*, the object of the eye is light, that of the ear is sound and so on.

58. The senses of an ordinary man are turned outwards and roam on external objects. Fresh impressions and disturbing influences therefore always arise. A man in Yog can, however, withdraw his senses from their objects at pleasure *i. e.*, carry concentration of thought so far as to make the senses inactive.

At will, then, friend, one's wisdom sure
Hath found its rest—a state secure ;

59.

Not when⁵⁹ the joys of senses cease
From want of power or disease,
For then the wish remains ; but he
Who sees the Great, from thirst is free.

60. 4, 172

The senses wild are ruin's source,
They take away the mind by force ;
E'en those who learned are and try
To stand their action, yield and die.⁶⁰

61.

But those who rule their senses blind,
And joined to Me, in Me confined
Do rest, whom senses all obey,—
My friend, of settled wisdom they.

62.

A constant thought of worldly things
For them attachment doubtless brings ;
Attachment breeds desire ; and thence
Fierce anger comes in form intense.

63.

From anger want of judgment grows,
Whence one forgets all good one knows ;

59. It might be concluded from the preceding verse that wisdom is gained whenever a man cuts off his senses from the enjoyment of their objects. This verse makes it clear that it is not so. The wise man can not only make his senses recoil from their objects but the desire for sensual enjoyment is also conquered by him.

60. The senses, if unchecked, lead the mind to worldly objects. How this leads to death i. e., extinction of spiritual life is explained in verses 62 and 63.

And thus doth reason's loss arise,
And man from want of reason dies.⁶¹

64.

Yet not as sin enjoyment shun ;⁶²
Enjoy the world ; but see 'tis done
With senses under self-control
And free from love and hate ; the soul
Enjoying objects thus doth gain
Contentment, void of earthly pain.

65.

Contentment puts and end to all
Dire sorrows which the mind enthrall
Of mortal man ; a soul so blessed
Doth soon in settled wisdom rest.

66.

No wisdom his whose passions sweep
Unchecked, nor thoughts condensed and deep
Fixed on the High ;—a soul 'tis sure
Without such thoughts peace can't secure.

67.

As boats by gales and storms are tossed
Now here, now there, and often lost ;
So human wisdom by a mind
Which follows senses wild and blind,
Is driven and dashed and made a wreck ;
So keep thy senses well in check.

61. Becomes devoid of the signs of spiritual life for the time being.

62. A constant thought of worldly things leads, as explained in the preceding stanzas to spiritual death. But for that reason worldly things are not to be absolutely forsaken. There is no harm in enjoying them unattached and with self-control.

68.

Thou strong of arms, for this I say
That who at will can draw away
His senses from their objects, he
A man of settled wisdom, free.

69.

What night is for all others' sake⁶³
'Tis time when masters are awake
Of passions wild ; when wakeful all⁶⁴
'Tis night, such holy hermits call.

70.

To ever filling ocean grand
As various waters⁶⁵ glide and stand
Full unperceived ; so joys may burst
On master minds which know no thirst
By hundreds, but they do not swell
Nor change, nor feel disturbed. These well
Can peace secure ; not such as care
And run for pleasures here and there

63. This stanza explains that the spiritually developed sages who have conquered their passions and have thus attained Karma-yog, live in an atmosphere wholly different from that in which the common people live. Their thoughts are centred in and their whole mind is occupied with things of which the ordinary man knows nothing. Thus a circumstance which affects a Yogee materially and leads to exertion and activity on his part, makes no impression whatever in the ordinary man, who as it were sleeps over the circumstance at the dead of night. Similarly the ordinary events of every day life, affect the worldly man and he is wide awake in respect of them ; but the Yogee is not at all affected by them and hardly perceives them being absorbed in other things. He may thus be said to sleep in deep unconsciousness of these worldly events.

64. The common people.

65. Rivers.

71.

Devoid of all desire who lives
 Attached to nought as his, and gives
 No way to pride⁶⁶—a peaceful mind,
 The fortune of the blest, doth find.

72.

In Godly wisdom high to rest
 This⁶⁷ is ; the mortal that is blest
 With such a state can never be
 Deluded, Pārtha, doubtlessly ;
 This envied state at death-bed got
 Brings on salvation's happy lot."

END OF BOOK II.

66. To the sense namely, that I am the doer and things are mine.

67. This is to rest in high Godly wisdom *i. e.*, this state is that of resting on divine wisdom. Throughout the latter half of this chapter the state of Karma-yoga or communion of action has been described as the true wisdom. It consists in having a frame of mind in which work is done from a pure sense of duty without anxiety or attachment for the result and can be attained by controlling the senses. It is now stated that this true wisdom leads to salvation.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK III.

— 00 —

Arjun is confounded. "You praise wisdom" he says to Krishna "and condemn acts; but still instead of advising me to retire from the world and try to attain wisdom, you wish me to take part in this battle." Krishna thereupon explains that he objects not to action but to attachment and desire. On the other hand he urges for the following reasons that man should work :—

(1) Man cannot become workless by forcibly checking his organs of action; such forcible check results in the mind brooding over acts and objects from which the organs are restrained. It is therefore better to let the organs of action work under the control of the mind.

(2) Action is not bad. All acts do not bind us to the world or stand in the way of salvation; on the other hand acts done for the worship of God lead to true knowledge. Acts such as rituals should be performed out of gratitude to the *Devas* and also for preserving the cycle of creation.

(3) Those who have attained real knowledge need not do any act for their own benefit, but they should

work for the benefit of the masses who have not attained true knowledge. The only means of spiritual advancement suitable for common people in the beginning is the practice of good action.

(4) It is no use trying not to act ; our nature—the accumulated impressions of our previous actions—*will* make us work. We should not therefore attempt forced inaction but try to be free from attachments and dislikes which are the sources of sins of all kinds.

Arjun feels that to remain free from attachments and dislikes is not easy ; there is something within man which compels him to become subject to them. He asks Krishna what that is. Krishna explains that it is desire and its effect anger. Desire sways the senses, will and reason and thus thoroughly enslaves its victim. The way to kill it, is to bring the senses under the control of the mind and to acquire true knowledge of the soul which is the best of all existing things.

BOOK III.

— 00 —

KARMA YOGA OR COMMUNION BY ACTION.

And Arjun said, " Janárdan kind !
If wisdom's better to thy mind,¹
Than acts, what leads thee then to press
My mind to deeds of dire distress ?²

2.

In doubtful words³ is led astray—
It seems—my wisdom ; do thou say
The way decisive that will lead
My mind to what is good indeed."

3.

The Lord replied, " O sinless, meek !
For men upon this earth to seek

1. In the preceding book Krishna has repeatedly said that real bliss and salvation cannot be attained by doing any acts prescribed by the vedas or any other authority but only by acquiring true wisdom of which he has indicated two kinds ; (1) Having real knowledge regarding the nature of the spirit (Sámkhya Yoga) (2) Purifying motives of action (Karma Yoga). Arjun now asks that if bliss is to be attained by true wisdom and not by action, why he should engage in such acts as warfare instead of retiring and trying to acquire wisdom.

2. The impending war.

3. Words requesting me to fight on the one hand and those urging the acquirement of wisdom on the other. Compare for instance verses 3, 37, 38 of Book II with 45, 50 &c., of the same book.

Salvation rare, two ways⁴ are laid
 As even now to thee I said ;
 For some 'tis knowledge true and sure,
 For others, acts' communion pure.

4.

Who doth no work we see, in fact
 Isn't workless, for the mind doth act ;
 And e'en who work renounce may miss
 Success—salvation's greatest bliss.

5.

No one can e'er a moment spend
 In perfect worklessness, my friend ;
 All helpless act by Nature's laws—
 Of active life the mighty cause.

6.

Who checks from acts his organs all
 Of action,⁵ but doth still recall
 Their objects in his busy mind,
 Is false, poor soul ! deluded, blind.

7.

Far better he who lets by tact
 The organs all of action act,
 With senses under self-control.
 And unattached—a blessed soul.

8.

Work always thou—as actions are
 Than worklessness sure better far ;
 Thou canst not manage e'en this frame
 Of flesh and blood without the same.

4. See note ¹, Book III above.

5. Five organs of action, five organs of perception and the mind—these are the eleven means of activity according to Hindu philosophy.

9.

Nor fear, as some indeed do say,
That all acts bar salvation's way ;
In rituals, for Lord Vishnu⁶ those
That are performed, do ne'er impose
Dire action's bonds ; hence Kunti's son,
See acts without attachment done.⁷

10.

With rituals did the Lord create
All beings at first and thus did state
His orders then ;—"Do you by this
Attain prosperity and bliss ;"
And further more "Be this for you,
Fulfilment⁸ of you wishes true.

11.

With rituals thus the *devas* please
And may they work to give you ease !⁹
By mutual good will both derive
What's good for both and happy thrive.

12.

For such are thieves as get their food
From gods¹⁰ and not return the good

6. Vishnu is a name of the Supreme Deity in the vedas.

7. Perform acts but see that you are not attached to earthly things.

8. Be the rituals the means by which all your good desires will be fulfilled.

9. This idea of an exchange of service between the inhabitants of heaven and those of earth is common in Sanskrit works. Men should perform rituals and offer oblations of *ghæe* &c., for the benefit and pleasure of gods and the gods in their turn will bless the earth with rain, plenty and happiness.

10. Gods *i. e.*, *Devas*, the inhabitants of heaven. The translation of *deva* by the word 'god' should not mislead the careful English reader of Hindu philosophy. The word as thus used means only a superior class of beings who inhabit the *svarga* or heaven of Hindu mythology. The use of the plural *gods* does not therefore imply that the Hindus have no idea of the One Supreme Spirit.

By grateful rites,—unlawful thrift—
Forgetting that 'tis all their gift.

13.

On remnants of religious rite
Those men that live do what is right,
And sinless are ; who cooks his food
For self, eats sin, 'tis understood.

14.

Life springs from food, all food doth grow
From clouds, which their existence owe
To rituals pure, and rites indeed
From acts of living men proceed.

15.

From veds all acts—the veds do flow
From Lord Eternal thou shouldst know ;
Hence all pervading God is found
Firm fixed in ritual's sacred ground.¹¹

11. God resides in rites *i. e.* He can be attained by performing rites. Just as we say 'success resides in diligence.' Because rites are prescribed in the vedas which are considered to be the breath of the Almighty Himself, they are the true means of attaining God.

This seems to be in direct opposition to the attack on the blind followers of the vedas in Book II, verses 42-46. Indeed throughout the end of the last book Krishna has impressed on Arjun that salvation can be attained by true knowledge and not by performing rites. The reconciliation of these two apparently conflicting views is to be found in the fact that Krishna condemns rites and other forms of action as a substitute for spiritual culture but appreciates and extols them as *means* to that end. If a man thinks that by performing a certain ritual he will gain salvation irrespective of any spiritual culture, he is surely mistaken. But if he performs the ritual as a means to spiritual improvement he is right and may benefit materially by it. Therefore also it is stated in verse 17 of this book that those who have attained the end *viz.*, self-knowledge by spiritual culture, need no longer care for the means *viz.*, action.

16.

The sensual, sinful live in vain
 Who cannot, Pârtha, here retain
 His way in circle¹² thus described,
 By will of God so well contrived.

17.

But who in self, enjoyment find,
 Whose pleasures are in self confined,¹³
 Men self-contented, virtuous, true,
 No active work have here to do.

*18.

For works performed they do not gain,
 Nor lose if they from acts refrain ;
 They don't require and never take
 One's help for their salvation's sake.

19.

Hence¹⁴ do thy duty, free from care
 For actions' fruits, and happy fare ;

12. The circle described in verse 14. A man if he acts according to the vedas must perform rituals. These produce clouds and clouds produce food and food produces life again. Now if the new living being acts according to the vedas, then rituals, rain, food and life will follow in succession and the circle will be repeated ; but if he does not act according to the vedas, there is an end. Those that do not move in this circle *i. e.*, do not act according to the vedas are sinful.

13. This refers to wise men who can find enjoyment in contemplation and do not want external pleasures.

14. In stanzas 17 and 18 it has been explained that the wise only may exercise the option of acting or not acting according to their pleasure. It has also been shewn before that others *viz.*, ordinary mortals must act. So Arjun, not yet having acquired knowledge, should not shrink from action.

For acts without desire like this
Do earn for men the highest bliss.

20.

By acts alone did Janak¹⁵ wise
And all like him obtain their prize
Success¹⁶ complete. And others too
To lead to work, work thou shouldst do.

21.

For great men's deeds are copied by
The masses; what the former spy
As just, the latter ready take
As good for mere example's sake.

22.

What I in these three worlds havn't got?
What can't I get? Forsooth there's naught
For Me to do; e'en then I say
In work engaged am night and day.

23.

If I inactive ever be
And leave off work, men after Me
Would idle be undoubted all
Without exception, great and small.

24.

My worklessness would put an end
To all good acts; and I, my friend,

15. Janak in Indian mythology is the type of a class of sages called Prince-saints. They lived amidst the splendours of the palace and performed their royal duties but became by culture absolutely free from attachment to any earthly thing.

16. Success in spiritual advancement.

Would bring on ruin on this earth
And be the cause of hybrid¹⁷ birth.

25.

To save the masses, rouse their fire
The wise who work without desire
Should work as if attached,¹⁸ not free
From ignorance of dire degree.

26.

Most careful he should work and make
The masses work for duty's sake.
'Tis never wise to draw away
The common folk from work ; for they
Have not true knowledge and can so
Through work alone in spirit grow.

27.

All work is done by nature's rule,
But self-conceited man—a fool—
Doth think himself the master sole,
And puffed up plays the doer's role.

28.

Not so the wise who know this much
That attributes and acts don't touch
The spirit ; and that senses all
And not the soul on objects fall.
No, such a man who knows all facts
Doth never think "'Tis I who acts."

17. How the want of pious deeds leads to hybrid birth, the greatest curse of society a Hindu can imagine, is explained in Chapter I, verses 39-40.

18. That is with all the zest and ardour of one who is deeply attached to worldly things.

29.

By nature's virtues blinded stark,¹⁹
 Short-sighted souls here grope in dark ;
 The senses and their actions all
 Of persons such the mind enthrall ;
 Such men the wise should never move
 From acts ; but let by acts improve.

30.

In Me all actions thou resign
 And calmly merge thy will in Mine ;
 Forgetting aims and 'mine and me'
 Go thou to war with firmness, glee.

31.

Those who these doctrines mine obey
 With faith, devotion, every day
 Are, in the end, all sure to be
 From iron bonds of actions free.

32.

But those who don't obey, who doubt
 From them all wisdom is shut out ;
 Their soul is lost—the more they think
 And act, the more in sin they sink.

33.

The knowing e'en here work 'tis found
 In their own nature's genial ground,
 The nature which doth hold them fast—
 Impressions left of actions past ;

19. The common people try to gain knowledge regarding spirit and the spirit-world from properties of objects as seen in external nature and are therefore deluded and misguided. They regard the body of man as his self and attach great importance to the action of senses. Such men can improve only by steadily performing the duties imposed upon them by the *śāstras*. It is extremely unwise to do anything which will move them from their reverence for action.

All creatures here to nature tend,
What's gained by checking senses, friend ?²⁰

34.

On objects let your senses roam,
The world's by nature's law their home.
But of attachments they form there
And of dislikes, my friend, beware !
To neither thou submission shew—
Of heav'nward souls eternal foe.

35.

So work ; in thy own field thou work
The duties of thy class ne'er shirk ;
Know, one's own duty barely done²¹
Is better far than laurels won
In others' fields ;—avoid them all,
In thy own duty rather fall."

36.

And Arjun said :²² " By what is it
That men beguiled do sins commit
Against their will, Bárshneya²³ dear,
As if by force impelled severe ?"

37.

The Lord replied : " It is desire
Which baffled leads to anger dire ;
From forcing attributes which²⁴ grow,
Unsatiated, strong, salvation's foe.

38.

It covers o'er all knowledge sound,
As womb the foetus doth surround,

20. There is not much good in trying to check one's senses, as man is bound to act in obedience to his nature *i. e.*, the impression of past acts.

21. Barely *i. e.*, even indifferently.

22. In stanza 34 Krishna advised Arjun to act but not to be subject to attachments or dislikes which lead to sin. Arjun feels that this is very difficult and asks the question.

23. Literally one of the Brishni class ; here Krishna.

24. Which *i. e.*, desire and anger.

As smoke doth shroud the burning light,
And thick dust veils the mirror bright.

39.

The knowledge of the wise, my friend,
Is covered up and finds its end,
In this their foe, eternal fire
That's hard to quench, this vile desire.

40.

The senses, reason, mind these all
Desire's own place, the learned call;
For observation thought and will
Do make its hard bonds harder still;
Thus shrouding knowledge doth it blind,
Delude and fool all human kind.

41.

Hence senses thine at first control,
And then with fully balanced soul
Do thou destroy this foul desire—
For holy knowledge fatal fire.

42.

The senses sure superior are
To matter—powerful, subtler far;
The mind directs the senses, so
Superior 'tis to them all know;
And reason freely moulds the will,
So 'tis than mind much higher still;
And soul, about which thoughts do stay
Is high'r than thought, the wise men say.

43.

The soul which thus is higher still
Than reason thine thou know; and kill
Desire so hard to slay—thy foe—
Firm fixed in wisdom one should know.²⁵

END OF BOOK III.

25. In true wisdom which every one should try to attain.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK IV.

—oo—

Krishna says that the practice of work without attachment and desire described in the previous chapter, had been preached by Him in his previous incarnations ages before ; but as it was forgotten by succeeding generations he has disclosed the truth again to Arjun.

Krishna then proceeds to explain that a man should not only work without attachment and desire, but at the same time try to throw away action from himself by attaining true knowledge. God Himself acts untouched by work and those devoted to Him can be like Him. Ofcourse, those that worship particular forms of the Deity for lower objects, get only the objects they want ; but those who practise pure spiritual devotion can attain the state in which action does not touch one and cannot therefore bind one to rebirth. Man should, in these circumstances, perform acts of religious merit ; that will not hinder salvation.

It is important to know what are acts of religious merit, what are the reverse and in what state man may be called workless. Various acts and rites described in the vedas are enumerated as religious and acts which are opposed to the vedas and proceed from doubt and irreverence are laid down as the reverse. But much

higher and better than all religious activity is the attainment of the blessed state of worklessness. Forced worklessness however involves effort. Only the man who works with the knowledge that he is not the actor is really workless. Such knowledge is attained by a man who by constant culture learns to work without attachment or desire, because he is in a position to view actions and their relations to him in a calm and philosophic spirit. When a man thus sees that he is not the actor, he naturally asks who the Real Actor is and gradually sees God in all his actions and attains Him by constant meditation.

While therefore we should practise various rituals which tend to spiritual improvement, we must always try to detach all action from ourselves by true knowledge *i. e.*, by attaining true knowledge we should cease to regard any work as our own. True knowledge is higher and better than all rites. It is the great object to which all rites only tend ; for rites do nothing more than prepare the mind for receiving true knowledge.

BOOK IV.

— 00 —

ON THE RESIGNATION OF ACTIONS BY KNOWLEDGE.

And thus the Lord ;—“ Communion this¹ I said
To Sol² the bright ; to Manu,³ Sol conveyed
The same ; and Manu duly did proclaim
To Ikshaku, his son of blessed name.

2.

The knowledge thus descending downward reached
The royal sages ;⁴ then unfrequent preached
In course of time on men it lost its hold
And in oblivion sank, unheard, untold.

3.

That knowledge old and good to thee to-day
All curious, did in full detail I say ;
Devoted art thou so, a friend so true
That fain to wisdom this thy heart I drew.”

4.

To whom thus Arjun soft : “ Thou came on earth
Long after Sol so old had tak’n his birth ;
How then, O Lord ! can I believe it pray
That Thou to him at first this truth did say ?”

1. This method of spiritual culture *viz.*, the practice of action without attachment and desire as taught in Book III.

2. The Sun-god is a familiar figure in Hindu mythology. He is said to have been the progenitor of the royal line of Ajodhya, the history of which forms the subject of the great epic Rāmāyana.

3. The son of the Sun-god.

4. Nimi and others of the solar line who, though kings, lived the life of ascetics. See Book III verse 20 and note thereunder.

5.

“ Unnumbered births, O Arjun” said the Lord³
 “ Both thine have passed and Mine which I record
 And know full well, but thou dost never know
 Forgetful all, O terror of thy foe !

6.

Although unborn, unchanging, Lord of all,
 Whom actions done to birth do ne’er recall,
 Suppressing nature Mine I take My birth
 Or seem to take to men upon this earth.

7.

Whene’er doth fade the light of virtue pure
 And vile impiety flourish all secure,
 Create I then Myself as mortal man
 Know thou, O Pârtha ! this my heavenly plan.

8.

To save the good whom sins at times decoy,
 The curse of earth, the wicked, to destroy,
 To virtue’s rule establish on this stage
 I take My birth as man from age to age.

9.

He who My sacred births and actions knows
 Such as they are, when off at last he throws
 His mortal frame, no future birth sustains—
 From bonds for ever free—but Me attains.

10.

From passions free and fear and anger dire,
 And filled by Me, depending on My power,

5. Both the God-spirit and the man-spirit have incarnations, but the One remembers them all while the other forgets. It is also explained in the next stanza that the rebirth of man is compulsory being due to the bonds of action, but the incarnation of Divinity is voluntary. In an incarnation the Divine Nature is suppressed but that is only apparent.

By knowledge and by acts from sins all free,
Men have in ages past been joined to Me.

11.

I favour men e'en in the way they serve,⁶
And give to all, their Lord, as all deserve ;
To My path, Pârtha ! men do hold on fast,
Whome'er they worship 'tis but Me at last.

12.

But yet not Me direct men worship here,
Of which the fruit though bliss, the means severe ;
Men worship other gods mean ends to gain,
For quick on earth such actions fruit attain.

13.

Each with its virtues own and duties too,
The fourfold castes have I created true ;
Indeed in Me their maker thou dost see,
But still am I from change and efforts free.

14.

Me acts can ne'er concern of any kind
Nor thou in Me desire for fruits shall find
Of works ; who know Me thus, the wise profound
In action's fearful chain are never bound,

6. Though only those who practise devotion as described in stanza 10 can be joined to God, yet those who practise other religious rites are not lost. Stanza 11 says that even those who worship to attain particular objects get what they want if they worship earnestly ; stanza 12 explains why most men worship to attain particular objects ; and stanza 13 declares that it is impossible in the order of nature that all men should rise up to the highest form of worship viz. devotion, and hence there are the four castes according to the stage of spiritual advancement reached by each.

15.

Thus knowing⁷ e'en the sages great of yore
 Who sought salvation, action's burden bore ;
 Do thou too hence perform thy work with grace,
 Which in the past your fathers did embrace.

16.

What action is, what not⁸ this truth divine
 E'en heads with wisdom filled cannot define ;
 Such knowledge therefore now to thee tell I
 So that salvation thou mayst gain thereby.

17.

A thousand mysteries from every side
 From man the knowledge true of actions hide ;
 What comes of actions good, what comes of ill,
 What comes from want of work, are darkness still.

18.

The man who worklessness in acts doth spy,⁹
 And acts that bind in worklessness¹⁰ descry,
 Is doubtless wise among the human kind,
 Though working he doth yet communion find.

7. That work can be done without the doer being at all concerned about it.

8. In stanza 15 it is said that man should work *i. e.*, do good and religious work. We should therefore know what are good works and what are bad works and what is meant by worklessness.

9. When a man works with the full knowledge that he is not the doer he is workless, though mechanically acting. See Book III verses 27-28.

10. Forced worklessness of the organs of action leads to effort *i. e.*, to action. See Book III verse 4.

19.

Whose acts are free from motive and desire,
 Who burns his acts¹¹ as 'twere by wisdom's fire,
 The learned, him extolling high do call
 The truly wise exempt from rise and fall.

20.

The thirst for fruits of acts for ever gone
 Who craves for naught, naught earthly rests upon,
 Engaged in actions though of various kinds
 Yet nothing does himself—no, naught that binds.

21.

From wishes free, with body mind controlled,
 Who gives up earthly joys and greed of gold,
 Doth never sin, nor path of bliss forsake
 By working unattached for body's sake.¹²

22.

Content with things that come themselves unsought,
 Who takes both good and ill with equal thought
 To none unfriendly, who doth equal see
 Success, failure—while acting e'en is free.

23.

The acts of him who all attraction past
 Delivered is and joined to knowledge fast,
 Who works for sacred rites, whose mind is pure,
 Of worklessness the merit doth secure.

11. Acts are injurious if done with desire and attachment and the wrong knowledge that the man who apparently acts is the real doer. A man who has true knowledge acts, but his actions are purified as it were and divested of their injurious action on spiritual advancement by his knowledge.

12. This does not mean that the only works which we should do are those absolutely necessary for the support of the body. It is merely an illustration of the statement that all actions do not retard spiritual progress and bind us to rebirth.

24.

The vessel God¹³ and God the butter poured
 And God the fire and priest the God adored ;
 Who God in acts thus all in all observe
 And rest in them, sure find the God they serve.

25.

To please the lesser gods their rites perform
 Some men¹⁴ on earth ; while others have the form
 Of sacrificing all the rites divine
 By rites in God¹⁵—the fire that bright doth shine.

26.

Yet others¹⁶ are who hearing and the rest
 Of senses to restraint's great fiery test
 Consign ;¹⁷ and also those of holy name
 That senses' objects burn in senses' flame¹⁸

27.

And further sages¹⁹ are who actions cast
 Of senses and of vital airs at last

13. A beautiful illustration of realizing spiritualism by material symbolism—the same as eucharist among the Roman Catholics.

14. Those who follow the ritualistic portion of the vedas.

15. In the way described in stanza 24. A man sacrifices his rites by rites in God when having attained the higher stages of spiritual progress, in which God is perceived to be all in all, he dispenses with the performance of those rites or mechanically performs them knowing that he is not the doer.

16. Various acts of religious merit are described in this and the following verses with the object of ultimately asserting that true knowledge as described in stanza 24 is better than all of them.

17. Refers to those who restrain the senses *i. e.*, do not allow them to fall on their objects. They burn the senses as it were in the fire of restraint.

18. Refers to those who allow the senses to fall on their objects but by practice become indifferent to the sensations. They burn the objects as it were in the fire of the senses.

19. Refers to those who allow senses to play on their objects and produce sensations which they feel but by self-control prevent those sensations from troubling the mind. They may be said to burn the action of the senses in the fire of self-control.

In self-control's resplendent burning flame.
Feeling with the objects of their thoughts the same.²⁰

28.

Some rites of gift perform, while others take
Devotion's path austere and penance make ;
Some on communion best do fix the mind,
While some in Vedic knowledge comfort find.

29.

Some²¹ pour the upward on the downward breath
And check them both in calmness as of death,
And then the downward on the upward force
Performing thus Pránáyám's triple course ;
Some²² starve themselves and when the senses fade
Regard them offerings to the life-winds made.

30.

All these who know the rites and render clean
Their souls by them, and do from rituals glean
Their remnants and do live upon that food²³
Get God eternal e'en, the source of lasting good.

20. The effect described in the last note is obtained by concentrating the mind on one object with which the thinker becomes thoroughly identified.

21. Refers to the complicated operations of the *Hatha Yogees*—a class of men who believe that communion can be attained through various physical processes. They have systems of anatomy and physiology of their own. The various life-winds are supposed to flow from one region of the body to another thus carrying on the processes of life. A regulation of the flow of these winds is supposed to lead to various results.

22. Refers to those who believe starving and other forms of forced restraint to be works of religious merit.

23. Compare Book III verse 13.

31.

The man who does no rite—not one of those
Above described, O best of Kurus, shows
That he deserves not e'en short earthly bliss;
Where then his hope in life that's after this?

32.

Such rites unnumbered heavenly bliss to gain,
The vedas—word of God—do fully explain;
These rituals all from worldly actions rise,
Thus knowing shalt thou gain salvation's prize.

33.

But better far to practise wisdom's rites
Than action's rituals wherein man delights;
All acts, O Pártha, terror of thy foe,
But tend to what from wisdom doubtless flow.²⁴

34.

Acquire that wisdom thou from teachers good
By service, questions, true obeisant mood;
The right observers here and those that know
The path of knowledge true to thee will shew.

35.

That wisdom gained, O Pándav, ne'er again
Wilt thou deluded be by feelings vain,²⁵
By that upending creatures wilt thou see
Within thyself and last of all in Me.

36.

Should you of sinners all the greatest be,
Most hardened—yet the passage o'er the sea

24. Compare Book II, verse 46.

25. Like the weakness which makes you shrink from this righteous war.

Of sin, you can accomplish safe and swift
In wisdom's float if you but get a lift.

37.

As fire when flames of it do brightly burn
Doth heaps of wood to ashes quickly turn,
So knowledge pure and high, O Arjun dear,
Doth burn²⁶ with fruits all acts which men do here.

38.

For nought on earth is e'er so high, so pure
As blest self knowledge, wisdom true and sure ;
When man on acts' communion rests his mind
And doth deserve it, in himself doth find.

39.

He knowledge gains who faithful precepts hears
And follows them and checks his passions fierce ;
Thus wise and knowing, soon his errors cease
And then the highest peace he gains with ease.

40.

But sure destruction waits on earth for those
That heedless are to what the wise expose,
And so know not and doubt ; they have no bliss
In life that is to follow or in this.

41.

With actions resting firm on wisdom's ground,
With doubts dispelled by wisdom pure and sound,
The man of spirit true where'er he goes,
With triumph off his actions' shackles throws.

42.

Hence doubts that are of want of knowledge born
And carried in thy heart both eve and morn,
By wisdom's massive sword do thou destroy,
And Bhárat²⁷ rise, O rise, with yog and joy.

END OF BOOK IV.

26. Compare Book IV note 11.

27. Arjun was so called because he was a descendant of King Bharat.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK V.

—oo—

Arjun is still doubtful. "Who is the better" he asks, "the man who having acquired true wisdom renounces work, or he who works without desire and attachment?"

Krishna explains that in the beginning action without attachment is better than renunciation. The two methods of spiritual improvement are not however distinct, as the one leads to the other. He who acts without desire is practically a renouncer of acts; in fact it is impossible to attain renunciation except through the practice of doing work without desire and attachment. When a man is free from attachment and desire and works from a pure sense of duty, it becomes easy for him to attain the true knowledge that what we call man's work is not really done by him—delusion merely makes us think so. That true knowledge attained, man sees who the Real Doer is and strives for communion with Him. By constant meditation and by keeping the mind free from the action of passions, man attains that object and merges his spirit in the Supreme Spirit.

BOOK V.

— 00 —

ON RENOUNCEMENT.

Arjun :—

Of acts renouncement and performance too
Dost thou O Krishna, speak ;¹ the favour do
To mention which of these may better serve
To make my mind the highest bliss deserve.

2.

Krishna :—

Renouncement and performance both do tend
To bring to man salvation's happy end ;
But 'tween the two if judgment I must give,
Work rather,² than in forced renouncement live.

3.

For none renounceth truly, none but he,
From hatred and desire who still is free,
And he alone can action's bonds forego
Who feels the same all worldly weal and woe.³

1. Compare III, 17 and IV, 33 in which the state of a truly wise man who is indifferent to action has been extolled as the highest, with III, 8 and IV, 15 in which action has been extolled and Arjun advised to act. This apparent contradiction in Krishna's teachings is due to Arjun's failure to appreciate that action is praised as best for men in the lower stages of spiritual improvement. When man acquires the habit of acting without desire and attachment, he attains true knowledge thereby and rests his spirit in the Supreme Spirit. He can then become indifferent to action which is of no consequence to him at that stage.

2. This advice applies to men like Arjun who have not made much progress in spiritual advancement.

3. Hence renouncement can be attained only by such culture of the mind as is afforded by actions.

4.

Of true renouncement and of actions done
Without desire—the results are but one ;
Most childish they who say that they differ,
Of wisdom void,—most certainly they err ;
Who hath attained the one⁴ full well is sure
What bliss from both⁵ doth follow, to secure.

5.

High bliss do workers pure attain, the same
They win, who know and shun all worldly game ;
Observes he right who sees as one⁶ the two,—
To work or to renounce with knowledge true.

6.

But true renouncement he can never make
Who learns not first to work for duty's sake ;
That done, O mighty armed, with peaceful mind
One can renounce and rest in God can find.

7.

Employed in actions pure the chastened soul
With body conquered, passions in control,
Sees One Great Spirit in all objects fixed,
And working still with work is never mixed.

8-9.

In seeing, touching, smelling, hearing sound,
In tasting, thinking, breathing, treading ground,
Discharging, talking, taking, actions all—
E'en opening eyes or letting eyelids fall—

4. The practice of working without desire and attachment.

5. That is from pure actions and from knowledge coupled with renouncement.

6. Leading to the same end *viz.*, salvation.

The senses only in their objects roam⁷—
 By Nature's law their meet and wonted home ;
 Convinced of this the holy man doth see ;
 In all he does no active worker be.

10.

Without desire who act in God resigned,
 Untouched by sin are they ; as one doth find
 On lotus leaf though watery drops do lie
 They never touch nor wet—'tis always dry.

11.

And so they purge themselves, by doing all
 Their work without attachments which enthrall ;
 Not they themselves but 'tis the mind in fact
 And body, wit or senses that do act.

12.

Forgoing fruits of acts such workers gain
 Peace absolute ; while those endure the chain
 Of actions, hard who wallow in the mire
 Of worldly thoughts and act from vile desire.

13.

All acts renounced in mind the gladdened soul
 That hath its passions all in strong control,

7. The various actions here enumerated can be classified thus :

The work of the five senses *viz.*,
 eyes, ears, nostrils, tongue and
 the skin.

Seeing, hearing, smelling tast-
 ing and touching.

The work of the five organs
 of action *viz.*, hands, legs, organs
 of speech, digestion and genera-
 tion.

Taking, treading, talking, dis-
 charging.

The work of the mind.

Thinking.

The work of the winds.

Breathing, opening and shut-
 ting eyes &c.

While dwelling in its home of doorways nine,⁸
Doth naught ; nor work to others doth assign.

14.

The Lord 'creates not work nor actors e'en,⁹
Nor joins to work its obvious fruits unseen ;
'Tis nature which in matters such prevails
That does all works, attempts, succeeds and fails.

15.

Hence He doth ne'er take cognizance in men
Of sin or virtue ; mortals think Him then
As doing so when wisdom they do quit,
And darkest night doth cover saintly wit.

16.

But those whose knowledge errors doth efface,
See by its light the Lord's resplendent face,¹⁰
E'en as the solar disc in sky doth shine
Enlightening all the world with splendour fine.

17.

Washed clean of sins, by knowledge they forego
Rebirth—the fruitful source of human woe ;
E'er following him by wisdom, faith and make,
In Him resigned for naught but for His sake.

8. The body is a dwelling for the spirit. The nine doors are the seven orifices of the head and the two others in the body.

9. God makes men work but it is not He that makes them feel that it is *their* work and that they are the doers. Nor does He join men with the fruits of their action. It is man's deluded nature which makes him think that he is an independent actor and that he enjoys the fruits of his action.

10. The error *viz.*, that man does work, being effaced, the Real Worker is seen.

18.

In men of lowest castes or Bráhmans sage,
 In curs or kine or elephants mad with rage,
 Those who see equal merit—just the same,¹¹
 They are the sages wise of blessed name.

19.

A strict equality whose minds do know
 They conquer true e'en here the world of woe ;
 For God is faultless sure, and changeless He,
 Hence joined to Him such men must always be.

20.

Let none exult attaining what he would,
 Nor feel aggrieved to meet what seems not good,
 The man who knows his God, in Him doth rest,
 Knows no delusion—fixed in wisdom best.

21.

So one who bliss in self enjoys serene
 All unattached to world, which senses keen,
 Roam freely o'er ; firm joined to God doth gain
 A happy state that one doth e'er maintain.

22.

For such enjoyments as the senses breed
 In contact with their objects form the seed
 Of griefs ; they rise and vanish, hence the wise
 O Kunti's son ! such pleasures do despise.

11. The sense of sameness follows from the knowledge that all are mere instruments. We think some living things good and others bad on account of their respective actions. When the real knowledge about action and actor comes, the distinction between good and bad must vanish.

23.

The man who here,¹² e'en in his mortal frame,
Resists the force of anger and can tame
The vile desires that rise, doth surely find
Communion blest—the happy state of mind.

24.

Who happy feel within, in self do play
Who see the light within, true joined are they ;
Those hermits pure within the Lord are placed,
And lost in Him do live by Him embraced.

25.

In God extinction¹³ gain the seers pure
Who kill the "sense of two" and do secure
Control o'er self complete and sins destroy,
And in creation's good their time employ.

26.

Ascetics such as rule their senses all,
And knowing self are free from rise and fall
From fond desire or wrath, begin to share
In God extinction in this world of care.

27-28.

Who shutting out of mind all objects vain
A steady sight between the brows maintain ;¹⁴

12. In this world.

13. "Brahma-nirván" is the word used in the text. It means the merging of the human spirit in the Great Spirit. It is a totally different idea from the Buddhistic idea of Nirván which is absolute extinction similar to the extinction of a flame.

14. This is a reference to the system of Hatha Yoga some of the practices of which—the simplest ones—are adopted by many devotees for bringing about concentration of the mind. See Book IV verse 29 and note.

The outward with the inward breath who mix,
And in the nasal path the current fix ;
Who on salvation bent do conquer all
False wisdom, mind and senses which enthrall ;
From wish and ire and fear who clear their mind,
True freedom they and they alone can find.

29.

Observing Me, the Being for Whom are meant
The rites, towards Whom devotion all is bent,
Of all that live and move, the Friend Supreme,
Content they gain—of life the fondest dream.

END OF BOOK V.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK VI.

— 00 —

Krishna further emphasizes the sameness of working without desire and renunciation. They are not separate means of spiritual culture independent of one another, but are processes to be followed by the same individual in different stages of advancement. In the beginning pure work must be practised. When, by that means, true knowledge has been attained, renunciation may be adopted. It is a cultured and disciplined mind which leads to spiritual success; it is an untrained and vicious mind which leads to spiritual fall. So within one's self one has one's best friend and one's worst foe. A man should discipline his mind by trying to regard dust and gold equally attractive. Sitting in a straight posture in a sacred and lonely spot, a man should try to subdue his mind by contemplation of the Supreme Spirit. Only a man temperate in food, drink, sleep and in all other actions can attain the blessed state of yoga, in which a man becomes absorbed in self and remains calm like an undisturbed flame. Subduing all desires and fixing the mind in one's self by slow degrees, one can by patient wisdom attain the state of yoga in which all sins are washed clean by the direct perception of Divinity. A yogee sees the

Lord in every thing and the Lord does not lose sight of him for a moment.

On hearing this explanation of communion by concentration of the mind, Arjun says that it is a difficult process, nay, as impossible as to check a storm. Krishna does not deny that it is difficult, but says that it can be attained by constant effort.

Arjun thereupon wants to know what becomes of a man who starts in the path of yoga by doing virtuous actions but fails to discard desires altogether and attain yoga. He is afraid that such a man is absolutely lost. Krishna explains that it is not so. Such a man reaps the fruits of his meritorious acts in the shape of residence in a heavenly region for some ages, and then takes birth in a good and virtuous family. The wisdom attained by the efforts of his former births leads him to exert for becoming a devout yogee—the highest state a human being can attain.

BOOK VI.

— 00 —

ON CONTEMPLATION.

Renouncers they of works—while workers too—
Regardless who of fruits all actions do,
As duty bids ; not they that¹ acts forgo,
Nor rites of fire, so useful, off who throw.

2.

Renouncement true and high doth mean to act
From duty pure ; O Pándav, know the fact ;
A worker pure again he ne'er can be
Who by renouncing wishes is not free.

3.

For such as wish to climb communion's peak,
Pure actions are the means that they should seek ;
For those howe'er who on that peak do rest,
The vedas say renouncement is the best.²

4.

To objects which the senses wander o'er,
To acts which senses do, when one no more

1. Those who do acts without being attached to fruits are real renouncers though apparently they are workers. Those that try to desist from work can not be true renouncers.

2. In the early stages of spiritual advancement man should work and gradually try to get rid of the elements of desire, passion and attachment. By that means true spiritual knowledge becomes easy to acquire, and meditation, with true knowledge, leads to communion with the Great Spirit. When communion is attained, it is no longer necessary for a man to work and he can practise renouncement if he wishes.

Doth feel attached, when killed are wishes all;
Then one communion-perched the *Shāstras* call

5.

By self well cultured should a man ascend,
By self untaught he never should come down ;³
Sure one's own self is here one's truest friend,
And in one's self one's fiercest foe doth frown.

6.

He who by self hath conquered self—the source
Of vile attachment's bonds, by such a course,
The best of faithful friends in self doth greet ;
His foe in self the sensual man doth meet.

7-8.

In chill and heat, in honour, insult grave,
The calm self-conquerors firm like rocks behave ;
By knowledge taught or that directly gained
Their souls are filled—their nature pure retained ;
They know communion and from passions free,
Do gold and dust and stone all equal see.

9.

Unselfish benefactors, loving friends,
And foes and arbiters for peaceful ends,
And neutral men who see but come not near,
And objects of one's hate and of one's fear,
And worldly sinners and the chaste and pure,
As one who sees is truly wise—be sure.

3. A man should discipline himself well and thereby advance spiritually; he should not allow himself to remain uncultured and by that decline in spiritual matters.

10.

Alone the holy saint shall live and be
 The master of his body, mind, and free,
 Shall hope for naught, take naught and only strive
 In deep communion still his self to drive.

11.

First he shall lay firm, far from worldly sound
 His seat, nor high nor low, in sacred ground
 On *kus*—the holy grass—and then shall spread
 A skin and thereupon a cloth of thread ;

12.

And seated there at rest, controlling all
 His senses wild and thoughts which cause one's fall,
 With pointed mind, to sanctify the soul
 Shall practice *yog*⁴—devotion's final goal.

13-15.

With body, head and neck, firm fixed, erect,⁵
 The man in *yog* shall point his sight direct
 At his own nose's tip, and shall see naught
 Around himself not least disturbed by thought ;
 And void of fear, in perfect self control,
 With mind in check, and calm and peaceful soul
 Should sit for *Me*,⁶ with *Me* in heart combined,
 And lost in *Me*—eternal blessing find.

4. Yoga or *yog* is the Sanskrit term for communion ; one who practises *yog* is a *yogee*.

5. The position of the body here described is one in which concentration of the mind can be easily effected.

6. That is the Great Spirit. Krishna identifies himself with Divinity.

16.

Not he communion finds indulges who?
 In eating much and in long slumbers too ;
 Nor he who lives without sufficient sleep
 Or food enough a perfect health to keep.

17.

All temperate who are in food and fare
 And sports and all the work which man doth share,
 In sleep and wakefulness, they only gain
 Communion blest which kills all worldly pain.

18.

All hankerings gone of foul desires, the mind
 From wanderings free, when rest in self doth find,
 To yog by sacred ties 'tis joined they say—
 The learned men profound of holy way.

19.

E'en like a flame of light that flickers not
 But steady burns in windless regions brought,
 The joined and self-controlling sages sure
 Live calm in soul's communion high and pure.

20.

That blessed state in which the human mind,⁷
 By practice of communion true, doth find

7. Moderation in food, drink &c., are considered favourable to meditation and spiritual culture by the authors of all Sanskrit philosophical works.

8. In this and the following stanzas a description of the state of absolute Yoga is attempted. This is Samādhi and is different from the partial communion described in the previous chapters. The idea is that God is perfect in all directions *e. g.*, knowledge, purity of action &c. When a man approaches perfection in any of these directions, he becomes united with the Great Spirit as regards that attribute. But the state here described is that in which the whole man-spirit is merged in the God-spirit.

Enjoyment deep and that in which it spies
Within itself the spirit, and doth rise
To regions of contentment high and peace—
Is holy yog, which gained, all sorrows cease.

21.

The state, whate'er it is, in which the bliss
Supreme, that wisdom grasps though senses miss⁹
Is felt—the state which one doth ne'er forgo
When once attained, communion that thou know.

22-23.

Which gained, no other gain as great appears,
And man is not disturbed by trials fierce,
That state from worldly woe and bliss so free,
Should by the name of yog be known to thee ;
Yog—which should sure be known by every mind,
Free from all doubts, resolved this state to find.

24.

Becoming free of worldly wishes all
Which motive breed, and bring about one's fall,
And keeping senses well in mind's control,
Man should do yog—the blessing of the soul.

25.

Placed in himself by patient wisdom sure,
His mind from other thoughts he should secure
Complete and taste the heavenly bliss so sweet,
By slow degrees—the soul's delicious treat.

9. For yoga is the direct perception of one spirit by another without the intervention of senses.

26.

Should e'er the mind, by nature frail, digress¹⁰
 To objects vain—the root of dire distress—
 The sage will then by force immediate draw.
 And fix it firm in self—the sacred law.

27.

Exquisite joy thus seeks the saints content
 Who rest in peace, all world's attachments spent;—
 The sinless souls divine that Godward go
 And joined to Him in love of Him do grow.

28.

The sinless man on yog thus bent should curb¹¹
 His mind that worldly cares so oft disturb,
 And pleasure rare enjoy that takes its rise
 From touch Divine—the lucky mortal's prize.

29.

Who sees with equal eye wheree'er he goes
 All creatures, in communion pure who grows,
 Himself in all that lives and breathes doth find,
 And all within his own capacious mind.

30.

Who Me in all the universe behold
 And see in Me all things of worlds untold,
 Of him I ne'er lose sight—the man of bliss—
 Nor he doth Me for e'en a moment miss.

10. The idea in this and the following verses is that if the mind be kept undisturbed by worldly thoughts and fixed in self-contemplation, the presence of the Great Spirit is felt. It is only the disturbances of the world and our own thoughts that keep the perception of God away and therefore as soon as the mind is calm, the perception becomes vivid.

11. This and the following three stanzas describe how yogees see the one Great Soul enlivening all things.

31.

On Me—the all pervading One—who leans
And worships Me, though mixed in worldly scenes,
That blessed sage is not by care distressed,
But by belief in Me secure doth rest.

32.

Just as himself, all others who espies
And thinks as his, their woe and bliss, he's wise ;
He is in yog—the best of hermits pure,
Opinion mine knows this, O Arjun, sure.

33.

And Arjun said “ This yog of sameness high,
Exposed by thee, O Madhu's slayer !¹² I,
Can't grasp ; my mind most restless is and light,
How can it settled be which is so quick of flight ?

34.

Most wavering, Krishna, is the human mind
Unconquered, quick and sensuous firm, we find ;
Uncommon hard I feel to change its course,
E'en as it were to stop a storm by force.”

35.

And thus the Lord “ O strong of arms !¹³ the mind
Is doubtless hard to conquer—unconfined ;
But yet by practice and ascetic's way
We can subdue it, Kunti's son, I say.

36.

A man, unchecked whose mind, communion rare,
Opinion mine it is, can never share ;

12. Krishna once slew a powerful demon named Madhu.

13. The epithet is significant—you are strong of arms and can also be strong of mind if you try.

But he who hath a pure obedient mind
By means, from masters learnt, true yog doth find."

37.

And Arjun asked "O Krishna, what the fate
Of those that fail to reach a yogee's state—
Devoted who at first to work proceed,
But slip too oft and then from yog recede.

38.

Without support, bewildered in the way
Of bliss divine, O Thou Almighty say,
Do not the men unhappy—doubly cursed¹⁴—
Destruction meet, like clouds by winds dispersed?

39.

Thou canst, O Krishna mine, this doubt remove
Effective; save Thyself say, who can prove
Full equal to the task of cutting clean
This doubtful view of things, by wisdom keen?"

40.

And thus the Lord replied "O Pârtha dear,
Those who do good need not destruction fear,
They never get a state devoid of bliss—
Ne'er in the life to follow or in this.

41.

In yog who fails first goes to regions where
The virtuous have their homes when dead, and there.

14. Fallen both from yoga and action. They feel that they cannot get the fruits of action for they try to act without desire, and they do not attain salvation because they cannot base their action on true knowledge. The former fear is however groundless for they do get the fruits of good acts, *vide* stanza 41 below.

He lives for ages, then to take his birth
Of pure and wealthy parents on this earth.

42.

Or in the home of one of wisdom vast—
A yogee—one from yoga slipped is cast ;
And such a birth indeed for one to take
Most precious is for true communion's sake.

43.

And there he gains the touch of wisdom fair,
That he in former births did earn with care ;
Employs he that to win success again
In yog, O Kunti's son ! and not in vain.

44.

In that his life e'en if he helpless be,
By former practice acting yet, is free ;
A mere inquirer¹⁵ though of yog sublime,
Surpasses fruits of vedic acts¹⁶ in time.

45.

The saint who tries to practice yog with care,
Grows sinless and, through numerous births, the rare
Success he meets and thence—ah happy fate—
He gains at last the bliss—the highest state.

15. One ~~only~~ attempting to attain yoga. Even in this stage, he is superior to those who blindly follow the vedic rites for their fruits.

16. Gets something more valuable than such fruits *viz.*, salvation.

46.

Superior to the wise, devotees too
And also those that virtuous actions do,
A yogee is—I always clearly see,
Wherefore O Arjun, friend ! a yogee be.

47.

Amongst the yogees who doth Me adore¹⁷
And all his heart's regard upon Me pour,
The man devoted, with his soul in Me,
The best of saints on earth is surely he."

END OF BOOK VI.

17. As all yogees must be devoted to the Lord, this stanza seems to mean that the more devoted a yogee becomes, the more intimately is he joined in communion with the Supreme Spirit.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK VII.

—oo—

Krishna proceeds to explain the nature of spiritual perception which a yogee in communion with the Supreme Spirit attains. He perceives that the external nature is one manifestation—an inferior one—of the Supreme Spirit; and the spirit which enlivens all living things is another and a higher manifestation of the same. The Supreme Spirit is the essence of the various things found in these manifestations; but there is in them a delusive element which blinds ordinary mortals and prevents the true nature of the manifestations being known. Those only that worship God devotedly can get over this delusion.

It is then stated that worshippers of God are of four kinds *viz.*;—(1) those that worship to get over some danger or want; (2) those who pray for some object in this or in the after world; (3) those that want to know the real nature of God; and (4) the wise yogee who worships God for His own sake without any other object. All these are good, but the wise yogee is in the highest state. Those that worship for any object, worship other gods which have no separate existence and the Great God rewards their misguided

devotion by accepting their homage and granting the objects they desire. The mistake of these men in worshipping imaginary deities is due to the fact that the real nature of God is screened off from their eyes by delusion. Only those who are sinless and do virtuous actions can get over this delusion and conquer death by knowing God's real nature.

BOOK VII.

— 00 —

THE COMMUNION OF DIRECT PERCEPTION.

The Lord rejoined, " With mind attached to Me,
Dependent Mine, from other masters free,
Engaged in yog, how thou, O Pártha, hear,
Canst know Me doubtless, whole, with vision clear.

2.

True knowledge and perception¹ in its chain
Which once possessed, nought here to know again
Remains in this the mortal world—now I
In full shall say to thee—to follow, try.

3.

In thousands here say one perchance with care,
Attempts success to meet and happy fare ;
Of those that try to find success, again,
One rarely knowledge Mine doth true obtain.

4.

The earth and water, fire and air and sky,
The mind and reason, sense of mine and I,

1. Spiritual perception differs from knowledge in as much as it is acquired without the intervention of the senses and the mind.

These eight² are nature Mine since world began,
In deep delusion³ steeped that hides Myself from man.

5.

Inferior this,—another nature Mine
Know thou, of mighty arms, that's more divine ;
It is the life of all ;⁴ of which the force
Creation this protects—its main resource.

2. The *tatvas* or existences enumerated in the Sámkhya and other systems of philosophy, are here grouped under eight heads. The twentyfour Sámkhya existences are :—

- (1) *Prakriti* (the essence about which the other existences cling.)
- |
- (2) *Buddhi* or *Mahat-tatva* (reason)
- |
- (3) *Ahamkāra* (the sense of mine and I)
- |
- (4-8) Five
organs of
sense.

(9-13) Five
organs of
action.

(14) Mind—an
organ both of
action and
sense.

(15-19) Five subtle
elements.
|
(20-24) Five coarse
elements.

In the enumeration here the five coarse elements *viz.*, fire, water, earth, air and sky include the corresponding subtle elements *viz.*, *Rupa* or light, *rasa* or moisture, *gandha* or smell, *sparsa* or touch, and *śabda* or sound respectively ; and the sense of mine and I includes, the five organs of sense and the five organs of action, which work through it. These manifestations are called in the Gita *aparā* or inferior *Prakriti* (nature). The *parā* or superior manifestation is the spirit mentioned in the next stanza.

3. The idea is that the external nature with all its substances and attributes is but a manifestation of Divinity—a manifestation which by its power of delusion, hides the real nature of the Eternal Spirit. A higher manifestation is the animal soul about which the attributes and objects of external nature cling and on which the living creation rests.

4. That is the spirit that animates all that lives and breathes.

6.

From natures these all living things do grow—
 The mighty causes both, of things thou know ;
 I am creation's source—and in Me too
 It finds its rest on ceasing, know this true.

7.

In this great world of objects, virtues, laws,
 None greater is—there is no other cause ;
 In Me, through Me, the universe is spread,
 In Me it rests like gems upon a thread.

8.

In water moisture I⁶ and I the ray
 In moon and sun, the lords of night and day ;
 In veds the sacred 'OM,'⁵ the sound in sky,
 True manliness in man am always I.

9-11.

In earth the scent, in fire the light and heat,
 In living⁷ beings the life, in saints the sweet
 Devotion I—the Sole Eternal Seed
 Whence living things, O Pārtha, all proceed ;
 Know Me the wisdom bright which fills the wise,
 And courage which in valiant hearts doth rise ;
 The strength sublime that makes the hero strong—
 Nor that by which men strive for fruits, do wrong
 And base attachments form and satisfy ;
 In man and beast all lawful cravings I.

5. The majestic monosyllable 'OM' called the *pranava* is supposed to be the most sacred and essential part of the hymns in the vedas.

6. This and the following stanzas describe how the Supreme Spirit is the essence of all things.

12.

Pure, forcing, dark,⁷ of nature virtues three,
Which fill the world are all derived from Me ;
In them howe'er reside I not, thou know,
But they in Me do lie, in Me do grow.

13.

By nature made up of the virtues three,
Deluded is the world that seems to see ;
In truth they know not Me and blinded are—
The Being that am not spent, supreme by far.

14.

Delusive nature this with virtues stored,⁸
Full wondrous is and hard indeed to ford ;⁹
Such men alone as worship Me can this
With ease get o'er—delusion's deep abyss.

15.

Not worship Me the fools of men, the worst,
The evil-doers on earth, the class accursed
That have their light of wisdom robbed by vile
Delusion ; men with demons' thoughts and guile.

7. See note to II, 45.

8. This nature which is a manifestation of God, ~~but~~ being full of the three kinds of virtue is incapable of being recognised by man as such.

9. Difficult to cross or penetrate. As soon as the delusion is got rid of, the real nature of God becomes known.

16.

Four kinds¹⁰ of lucky men do worship Me :
 Who are oppressed, who wish to know and see,
 Who long for objects loved, as well as those
 In wisdom's happy realm who safe repose.

17.

Of these the wise, to me devoted sole
 And always joined, are best—the spirits whole ;
 Hence dear extreme regard the wise men Me,
 And them too I with love supreme do see.

18.

Nay, all the four are loved, but I opine
 The wise are e'en the soul itself divine ;
 As they in spirit joined to Me do rest
 On Me—of men the state supremely blest.

19.

Rare is the man that after passing through
 Repeated births, acquires the knowledge true
 That all is but the Lord, and worships Me ;
 Of spirits all the blessed one he.

10. Of the four kinds of worshippers, the first consists of those who being oppressed by disease, want or a powerful enemy appeal to God for protection ; men of the second class worship God because they hope to gain some object in this or in the afterworld ; those of the third class want to acquire true knowledge of His nature and earnestly pray to Him ; while those of the fourth class—the highest—have acquired true knowledge and are joined to God in communion being absolutely without desire or attachment for anything else.

11. Compare VI, 43-45, and note how man acquires true knowledge through numerous births.

20.

With wisdom robbed by vile desires, some lend
 Their souls to minor gods for some mean end ;
 They do the rites, are faithful to their rules,
 Impelled by nature's powers like pliant tools.

21.

Whoe'er devoted, pious, bends before
 The forms of other gods, does Me adore ;
 Unmoved devotion his do I ordain
 On whom such feeling he does entertain.

22.

With that devotion burning in his mind,
 He worships that his god—on him resigned ;
 And gains from him, his worshipped god, what he
 Doth want in heart, bestowed in truth by Me.

23.

The fruits attained by these of little mind
 Have end howe'er ; the *dev*-devoted find
 The *devs*¹² they seek—the men that worship Me,
 To Me are joined from worldly motives free.

24.

Transcendent good, superior self divine,
 Unwasting nature true not knowing Mine,
 Do senseless men here Me—the Being best,
 Beyond expression think in form expressed.

12. *Dev* means a minor god. See Book III, note 10.

25.

Full covered by delusion—goddess sly—
Me all can't know, but only those that try ;
Those here that are beguiled can never see
My nature true—from birth and wastage free.

26.

E'en creatures all that lived in ages past,¹³
And also those whose races now do last,
And things alive that will in future grow,
I, Arjun know, but Me no one doth know.

27.

With body comes desire, dislike, and then
The sense of good and bad blinds sight in men,
From this, tormentor of thy foes, do all
In fierce deception's trap so helpless fall.

28.

The men howe'er, whose sins have found their end,
And who do virtuous deeds their minds defend
Successful 'gainst the sense of bad and good,
And see and worship Me in true devoted mood.

13. This stanza says that though *Māyā* or delusion blinds man, it does ~~not~~ blind the Lord whose vision remains clear through eternity. The words 'no one' in the fourth line should be read subject to the exception of the exceedingly few fortunate knowing men or yogees.

29

From death, disease, to save themselves who try¹⁴
 Depending on Myself true Godhead¹⁵ spy,
 The spirit¹⁶ grand as well from body free,
 And acts¹⁷ with all their curious virtues see.

30.

The men that Me do know with virtues Mine—
 The One who holding all¹⁸ doth brightly shine,
 The One within the solar disc¹⁹ who lives,
 The Author sole of rituals²⁰ all, Who gives
 The fruits of holy actions—such do know
 Me when thy die—when from this world they go.”

END OF BOOK VII.

14. The various stages by which communion with the Supreme Spirit is obtained are here repeated in their inverse order. First the mystery of action must be learnt. The true knowledge of spirit is then obtained and finally communion with God results. See Book VI note 2.

15-20. These six difficult words and phrases form the subject of Arjun's question and are explained by Krishna in the next book.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK VIII.

— 00 —

In this book Krishna further explains the nature of God and explains that the human spirit, the external nature and the god residing in the sun, are different manifestations of Him. He also explains what true action is, and how God lives in men and directs the religious rites they perform.

The man who remembers God in his last moments is saved, but only those who practice hard and try to worship Him devotedly throughout life can remember Him at the time of death. To be able to do so is far better than to perform rites prescribed in religious works. By the latter, heaven may be gained and the residence in it may extend over hundreds of thousands of years, but rebirth is sure to follow; but those who are saved get rid of rebirth and gain the highest bliss. It is stated how such saved souls are led through light to the Divine presence for eternal communion, while those who are only entitled to fruits of religious rites are led through darkness to some happy spot like the moon, where they enjoy the fruits of their good acts for some time, and then find their way back to the mortal world.

—

BOOK VIII.

—00—

ON COMMUNION WITH GOD, THE SAVIOUR.

Arjun—

That God¹ is what? the spirit² what? I pray
What's action³ true, O Best of Beings, thou say;
Who holds⁴ all creatures here—the holder grand?
Of solar disc⁵ who is of heaven's band?

2.

Who doth command the rites⁶ in bodies placed?
And, Madhu's Slayer bold, how is he traced?
And how the men who can control their mind
On death bed Thee, the Lord, do know and find?

3.

And thus the Lord "The cause and root of all
That knows no waste, the sages Godhead' call;
His nature's part that doth in bodies dwell
The spirit⁸ is—O Arjun, know this well;
The offerings made whence creatures rise and grow,
By name of action⁹ true the learned know'.

4.

Material nature¹⁰ that doth waste and change
Doth hold all creatures here; and in the range
Of bodied beings, the first—of gods the one
Supreme is he that lives within the sun;¹¹
Know too, thou best of those that body hold,
That 'tis in bodies I who guide the rites untold.¹²

1-6. See notes 15-20 Book VII.

7-12. These are the respective answers to Arjun's questions 1-6.

The definition of 'action' at 9 is an illustrative one. One kind of action is specified to give an idea of what is meant by action.

The being in the sun mentioned at 11 is a vedic conception. He is the first bodied being that came into existence after the desire for creation arose in the Supreme Spirit—out of him everything arose.

In the last line of Stanza 4 Krishna speaks as Divinity.

5.

Remembering¹³ Me who leaves his clay impure
And passes off, at time of death he sure
My nature does attain so full of bliss;
No doubt whate'er can there exist of this.

6.

The thoughts that fill one's mind at time of death,
E'en those one gains O Kunti's son! the breath
When out; by constant brooding on, the mind,
Itself accustomed to such thoughts does find.

7.

Hence always thou remember Me and fight;¹⁴
In Me the mind and wit resigned, thy right,
Wilt thou e'en Me attain, I doubtless say,
For knowledge thine, salvation's only way.

8.

To art of practice joined, the pointed mind
That has its thoughts on Him, does Pārtha! find
The glorious Person Great that lives on high,
And thus it does all worldly cares defy.

9.

Omniscient, subtlest of the subtle,¹⁵ old,
The Ruler Who doth all support and hold,

13. Stanzas 5-6 constitute Krishna's reply to Arjun's question in the last two lines of stanzas 1-2.

14. Because that is your duty. If you do your duty remembering Me always, you will surely attain Me.

15. The effect, work, is gross—the cause or power is fine or subtle. If we take anything gross and try to ascertain its cause and the cause of that cause and so on, we proceed to more and more subtle conceptions. The last cause in the link is the Existence referred to here.

With nature far beyond the stretch of thought
And matter dark, with solar glory fraught;—

10.

Such glorious Person great doth man attain
At time of death when 'tween the eyebrows twain¹⁶
The life-wind¹⁷ he doth place—unmoved and sure,
By strength of yog, devotion, rendered pure.

11.

Unwasting Which the learned vedists call,
The sages unattached within Which crawl,
For Which true learners duties hard perform,
How That to gain now thee I brief inform.

12-13.

Securing all the doors, confining close
The mind within the self, and where the nose
The eyebrows meet, e'en there the wind of life
Collecting, calming all the inner strife
By yog; repeating o'er the mystic "OM"¹⁸—
The word of letter one, the Deity's home—
The man who thus can leave his form of clay,
The bliss supreme attains, to Me the way.

14.

With pointed mind who always thinks of Me
And everyday, O Pārtha, surely he
With ease can Me attain—his certain share—
The man of constant yog, ascetic rare.

16. See V, 27; and stanzas 12-13 below.

17. See IV, 29; V, 27; and stanzas 12-13 below.

18. The mystic monosyllable 'OM' is considered to be the most important part of vedic hymns.

15.

And finding Me, its best success attained,
The spirit grand is never more detained
In dire rebirth—the fleeting home of griefs
And all delusive notions, vain beliefs.

16.

From heaven¹⁹ e'en O Arjun ! men retrace
Their steps to earth to fill the fittest place ;
But gaining Me rebirth they never find,
O Kunti's son, but live with Me combined.

17.

A thousand *yugas*²⁰ long is Brahmá's day,
His night is equal ; this who know and say.
They are the wise and knowing, men of light,
Acquainted with the truth of day and night.

18.

At dawn he wakes and from that cause unknown
Shoots forth the living world all fresh, full blown ;
When night appears, they all destruction meet
And rest in that unknown—their sole retreat.

19. See chapter II, note 38.

20. The following method of calculating Brahmá's time is here referred to. A human year is a day (and night) with the *devas*. Calculating years by such *deva* days 12000 years make one four-fold yuga, so that a fourfold yuga is really 12000×365 or 4380000 years. A thousand such yugas is Brahmá's day and his night is of equal duration. So Brahmá's day (and night) consists of 8760000000 years. Calculating years by such days and nights Brahmá lives for 100 years. The object of this reference to Brahmá's time is to make it clear that men who secure a happy existence in some heaven by good acts may enjoy it for a very long time but still they have to return. Even a Brahmá's happiness ends. But those that attain communion with God get rid of rebirth altogether.

19.

All beings repeated thus exist and die,
 With night's advent in cause absorbed they lie,
 When day again doth break O Pârtha dear !
 To life restored, in bodies all appear.

20.

A Being higher than this cause unknown
 Howe'er exists—th'eternal source alone
 Of all that is—Itself of cause devoid,
 Which dies not e'en when all the world's destroyed.

21.

This Being unknown is called in scriptures great
 The Lord unwasting ; He's the highest state
 Which gained, a man rebirth doth ne'er endure ;
 And I am That, O Pârtha, know this sure.

22.

In Whom all beings live of various grades,
 The Person great who all the world pervades,
 By strong devotion only He is won—
 Devotion, pointed, sure, which knows but one.

23.

The ways²¹ by which the yogee travellers gain,
 From life departing, birth, or else maintain

21. This and the following stanzas contain a reference to the method by which the spirit of man leaves the body after death (see *Brahma sutra* Chapter IV Section 2 and its commentary by Sankracharyya.) A small immaterial body is conceived, with which the spirit leaves the gross body and proceeds to a region of bliss or woe according to its deserts. Various *devas* lead the spirit to its goal. Those that are to attain communion with the Supreme Being are led to His presence by various bright gods while those that are only to enjoy the fruits of their good actions for a limited time and revert to earth, are led by darker gods.

Exemption from return—the state of weal—
To thee, O Bhárat best, I now reveal.

24.

By fire²² and brightness, day, the half year bright
When solar beams the northern sky do light,²³
By moon-lit fortnight²⁴ too the lucky go
To God Himself, the sages God who know.

25.

By smoke and night, the weeks when luna pines,²⁵
The months when sol in southern regions shines,²⁶
The travellers who depart from life by routes
Like these,²⁷ first reach the moon²⁸ and there the fruits
Enjoy of works, and then retrace their way
To earth and once more animate the clay.

22. Fire, brightness, day &c., here stand for the *devas* or gods respectively presiding over them.

23. The year is divided into two parts or *ayans* in Hindu Astronomy—the North *ayan*, covering the six months during which the sun is to the north of the equator and the South *ayan* covering the remaining six months when the sun is to the south of the equator. The North *ayan* begins on the 11th Pous corresponding roughly to 22nd December; the South *ayan* begins on the 11th A'shārḥ corresponding roughly to 21st June. The *deva* presiding over the North *ayan* is amongst those who lead the saved souls.

24. The fortnight ending in fullmoon.

25. The fortnight ending in new moon.

26. The South *ayan*. See 23 above.

27. Routes like these *i. e.*, routes presided over by the *devas* or gods of smoke, night &c.

28. The moon is supposed to be one of the happy regions where those who do acts of religious merit on earth can live for some ages as a reward.

26.

Eternal are the ways called white and dark
Of this our world ; by one do men embark
On birth again the source of fruitful deeds ;
To want of birth, the other surely leads.

27.

Those men who, Pârtha, know these ways divine,
Of wordly bliss forgetful, never pine,
Nor in the sorrows of the world they share ;
Hence thou O Arjun, practice yog with care.

28.

Of vedic learning and ascetic mood,
And charity and rites the fruits are good ;
But not so good and rare as knowledge this
Which got, one gains the prime and highest bliss."

END OF BOOK VIII.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK IX.

—oo—

Krishna explains that though He is the cause of all this universe and permeates through every part of it, He is not in the least affected by all the changes going on in it. He creates and destroys myriads of worlds through infinite time and space, but acts do not bind Him as they bind men. Those who know this real nature of God and worship Him devotedly are saved. But those that mistake a particular form assumed by God to be the real nature of God and worship that form instead of the real God are not so fortunate. If they worship a particular form of God earnestly and strictly according to vedic rites they may go to heaven ; but they are sure to be reborn on earth. Hence man should try to know the real nature of God and worship Him devotedly. Sinful men become virtuous by such a course *viz.*, by constant meditation and earnest and unflagging devotion.

BOOK IX.

— 00 —

THE BEST AND MYSTERIOUS COMMUNION.

The Lord did say "To thee who dost not try
To find in others faults, shall gladly I
The truth of knowledge and perception¹ say,
Most hidden, which all bonds will cut away.

2.

This knowledge is the prince of wisdoms² sure,
Of mysteries too, so good and always pure ;
Conceived direct, unwasting, pious, true,
And easy most to follow, pleasant too.

3.

Those men that careless are of knowledge this,
Afflicter of thy foes ! first Me do miss,
And then to world return through path severe—
So full of death, disease, so awful drear.

4.

By Me, Whose image ne'er expression finds,
Creation all is filled—the various kinds
Of beings in Me do rest,³ but Arjun, I
Untouched by them and ever free do lie.

1. Direct perception of one spirit by another is higher than ordinary knowledge gained through the senses.

2. It is usual in Sanskrit works to emphasize the importance of a subject at the outset in this way to secure seriousness and attention on the part of the reader.

3. Because I am their cause.

5.

Yes, beings touch me not, do study Mine
 This lordly virtue wonderful divine ;
 My spirit doth hold all—supporter grand—
 But I am free—on them I never stand.

6.

E'en as the powerful wind that moveth free
 In all directions, rests in space, in Me
 So dwell all creatures, yet untouched I lie ;
 Know this to be the truth sublime and high.

7.

O Kunti's son, all creatures do attain
 My nature⁴ at creation's end ; again
 Create I them with worlds all new begun
 Once more to live, their wonted course to run.

8.

Yes, resting on My nature true sublime⁵
 Create I them again and oft again,
 These worlds—so vast—of endless space and time
 Yet bound so helplessly by action's chain.

4. The idea of *Pralaya* or the end of creation is met with in Hindu philosophical writings. Just as every thing of the vast universe has sprung out of the One Spirit, so ultimately at the end of creation, everything will by a gradual process merge into It. Every gross substance will disappear into its subtle cause. These causes again will disappear into still subtler existences from which they originally sprang and this process will go on till everything will find its rest in the One Spirit—the subtlest existence. This process of *Pralaya* is the opposite of evolution and may be called involution.

5. Working unattached and without being bound by action. See stanza 4.

9.

But me these acts, Dhananjai,⁶ cannot bind,
 I act not from desire, nor fruits to find ;
 Like one without concern in actions those
 In peace and calm eternal I repose.

10.

By Me—its Master great—is nature made
 To bear the worlds which bud and bloom and fade ;
 All moving things and fixed, O Kunti's son,
 Thus led by Me repeated courses run.

11.

In human frame confined beholding Me,
 The men unknowing who can never see
 My form supreme as mighty Lord of all,
 Consider Me a man so sinful, small.

12.

Such men⁷ do hope and work for objects vain,
 Abortive wisdom theirs and weak again
 Their thoughts ; the dark and forcing virtues dire
 Do fill their minds deluded by desire.

13.

While those of mighty souls, O Pârtha dear,
 Me worship—placed on godly nature clear,
 Of other thoughts devoid and knowing Me
 The cause of creatures all, unwasting, free.

6. Another name of Arjun.

7. Those who think Me to be a man and worship a particular human form I take, instead of My real nature.

14.

Some singing loud My name do try to pray.
 And some firm fixed in vows try night and day,
 By low obeisance some devoted, free,
 And some fore'er by yoga joined to Me ;

15.

By wisdom's rites some others Me adore
 And e'en existence theirs in Mine do pour ;
 Some are devoid of sense of two,⁸ My friend,
 While some in two⁹ believe and 'fore Me bend
 As servants to their lord ; and sore demand
 That I pervade the world—the sky and sea and land.

16.

I am the vedic rites, those of the law¹⁰
 And those for fathers whence the dead men draw
 Their food in after world, and I the plant
 That feed the living, I the vedic chant,
 The holy butter I, the burning flame
 And e'en of act¹¹ am I another name.

17.

The father of the world and mother I
 And grandsire, sole dispenser here on high,

8. Those who think that there is but one existence *vis.*, the Supreme Spirit—a reference to the great school of *Advaitabddā*.

9. Those that hold man spirit to be a separate existence from God Spirit—a reference to the school of *Dvaitabddā*.

10. Several modes of worship are described above. How to know that the same God is worshipped by all when the modes are so different ? Hence the explanation in this and the following stanzas. Cf. IV, 24.

Three kinds of rites are referred to in this and the next line *vis.*, those described in the vedas, those enjoined by the legal treatises and those which men perform out of reverence to their ancestors.

11. That is the act of pouring the sacred butter on the fire.

The pure whom all should know and 'OM'¹²—the balm—
The vedas three¹³—the Yajus, Rik and Sâm ;

18.

The way, supporter, lord and witness, friend,
Protector too, the source and also end,
The peace, the stay, the final rest, the seed
Unwasting far that all the world doth breed.

19.

I lend to earth its heat and draw the rain
And bid it fall in showers to earth again ;
From Me proceed of life and death the laws,
I am the gross effect—the subtle cause¹⁴.

20.

The men who practise well the vedas three,¹⁵
Who drink the soma¹⁶ and are from evils free,
Do please the gods by rites and humbly pray
For heaven, and get that land so pure and gay,
And then enjoy the pleasures rare on high
Which in their bliss all worldly joys defy.

12. See VIII, 13 and the note under it.

13. The vedas are ordinarily divided into four codes—Rik Yajus, Sâmān, and Atharvan. But the last is very often discarded and the first three spoken of as the vedas. In fact European research has shown that the Atharvan is a much later production than the other works.

14. Because I assume all these forms and do all this, men worship me in different ways. See note 10 above.

15. See note 13 above.

16. The juice of the soma plant used in vedic rites. This fluid was held in great veneration and drunk by those engaged in rites and sacrifices.

21.

These men of rituals, tasting all the grand
Enjoyments good that heavenly homes command,
Return again to this the mortal sphere
Their virtues spent, to do new actions here;
These men obey for fruits the scriptures three
And come and go forever—never free.

22.

Devoid of other thoughts the men who serve
Myself—devoted quite to Me—deserve
My love; of those success complete I bring
In yoga¹⁷ rare, the best and sweetest thing.

23.

E'en those devotees who with piety pure
Do worship other gods, Kaunteya, sure
With rites informal Me alone adore
Unknowing—though they knock at others' door.

24.

I am the Lord Supreme of every rite,
Enjoyer too and I all hearts delight;
But Me, in nature true who do not ken
Return to world again those luckless men.

25.

Such men as gods adore, the gods attain,¹⁸
The father-seekers too, their fathers gain,

17. . Communion.

18. Cf. IV, 11 and VII, 23.

The devil-worshippers those sprites discern,
And those that worship Me e'en Me do earn.

26.

Good water, leaves and fruits and flowers gay
When with devotion men before Me lay,
These gifts of faithful hearts, though trifling, yet
I take with joy extreme and ne'er forget.

27.

Whate'er you do, enjoy or give, endure,
Whate'er perform of rites and worship pure,
O Kunti's son ! all those in Me resign,
And never think that fruits or acts are thine.

28.

By working thus, from bonds of action free—
Fruits good and evil both—wilt gain thou Me ;
In Me resigned entire, the holy soul
Doth me attain all free from world's control.

29.

The same am I to creatures all, and none
As friend I court and none as foe do shun ;
Devoted who to Me all faithful pray
In Me they live and I in them do stay.

30.

Devoid of other thoughts who worships Me
E'en if of evils great the author, he
Should yet be holy thought, because his mind
With zeal and patience is to Me inclined¹⁹.

19. A man may have committed sins but when he begins to worship God with his whole heart he must have given up his evil propensities and directed his energies to the path of devotion.

31.

A virtuous soul he soon becomes and gains
Eternal peace with ease which he maintains ;
O Kunti's son, this surely do thou know
That my devotees ne'er to ruin go.

32.

E'en those who sure in sinfulness are born,
Low castes untaught, low women—people's scorn—
In My protection they with ease do share
The highest state of living beings, so rare.

33.

Who then can doubt the lot of Bráhmans good
And royal sages—men in pious mood ?²⁰
Hence Arjun thou in this the world of woe
That transient is, to Me obeisance show.

34.

A thinker Mine, devotee, servant be,
Fall down on earth with bows profound to Me,
Of Me enamoured—joined to Me in mind
Shalt thou at last e'en Me, thy object find.

END OF BOOK IX.

20. It is superfluous to say that such men under My protection gain salvation,

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK X.

— oo —

Krishna says that all creatures and all their states arise from Him. He is the ultimate source of all things. Those who know this have got real knowledge. Arjun feels the truth of this and wants to know something of the lordliness and splendour with which Krishna pervades the universe. Krishna thereupon proceeds to enumerate a variety of objects of which He says He is the essence—the highest and the brightest part. In fact it is but a spark of His glory and power which holds the universe.

BOOK X.

— oo —

THE COMMUNION OF LORDLINESS.

And thus the Lord "O thou of mighty arms,
Do hear My words so rare and full of charms,
Which for thy good to thee I now shall say,
And which will gladden thee and wash thy sins away.

2.

My origin the deities do not know
Nor sages deep can light upon it throw,
Since I the source of all resplendent shine
Of gods that are and sages great divine.¹

3.

Who Me, devoid of birth, beginning sees—
The master great of heaven and earth—he frees
Himself from sins, to all attachment blind
And is on earth the blessed of his kind.

4.

Discretion, knowledge, calmness, pleasure, pain
And truthfulness and power to restrain
One's passions, peace and charity sincere,
Existence, want² and fearlessness and fear ;

1. Sages and gods cannot know My origin by their own knowledge or power since they have sprung from Myself. In fact none can know My origin without My grace.

2. Existence—life ; want—death.

5.

Contentment, want of cruel thoughts, a sense
Of sameness high, devotion true intense,
Desire to give, bad name and glory's prize—
All, all which beings have from Me do rise.

6.

Great sages seven³ and four⁴ before them e'en
And *manus*⁵ too, whose progeny are seen
O'er all the world in castes of many a kind
Are all from Me—the offsprings of My mind.

7.

The man who truly knows the wealth divine
Of lordly power that is exclusive Mine,
Is joined in yog, undoubted doth he see
In everything on earth a trace of Me.

8.

I am the source of all, from Me do flow
E'en all that is on high or here below,
The wise with knowledge such do Me adore
And from their inmost heart devotion pour.

9.

They live in Me, they have their minds in Me,
And 'mongst themselves, expound My nature free

3. Bhrigu and the others mentioned in the Purāṇas.

4. Sanaka and the rest.

5. In every *kalpa* or the life time of a creation there are fourteen *manus*. The names of those of the present *kalpa* are *Sudyambhūta*, *Swārochisha*, *Uttama*, *Tāmasa*, *Rāibata* *Chāksusa*, *Baibāsata*, *Sābarni*, *Dakṣa-sābarni*, *Brahma-sābarni*, *Rudra Sābarni*, *Deva Sābarni*, *Indra Sābarni*. The first six have passed away and the present age is that of the seventh. The rest are yet to come.

And still of Me do talk, and thus do gain
Contentment sure and purest joy attain.

10.

On these who always joined to Me do grow
And worship Me with love, I sure bestow
The wisdom high and pure by which they tend
To Me attain—of life the sweetest end.

11.

To them to give My grace serene—the prize—
I do destroy the darkness that doth rise
From want of knowledge, by the radiant light
Of truth whose lustre clear improves the sight.”

12.

And Arjun said “Thou art the Deity best
The pure and great, the highest place of rest,
The one eternal, bright, of gods⁶ the cause,
Devoid of birth and lord of heavenly laws.

13.

Thus Lord, by virtue these, do Thee define
The holy saints as Nárad great divine ;
Dewal, Asit and Vyas—they all say so,
And now from Thee the selfsame truths do flow.

14.

What sayest Thou O Kesab ! true I find,
The slightest doubt doth never cross my mind,

6. The reader must have noticed that the word god when used in the plural refers to the *devas* or inhabitants of heaven—a class of beings superior to men. The misleading translation of ‘*deva*’ into ‘God’ is perhaps responsible for the wide prevalence of the wrong idea amongst English speaking peoples that the Hindus are idolators and polytheists.

Expression thine O Lord ! no one doth know
Of gods above or demons dark below.

15-16.

By Thee Thyself, O Best, know'st Thou alone,
Creator, Lord and God of gods, unknown !
Do graciously in full to me relate
Thy wealth of lordliness and glorious state
By which the worlds whose number none can tell
Thou dost pervade and everywhere dost dwell.

17.

How, O Thou joined to all, shall I get light ?
How think of naught but Thee all day and night ?
Say in what objects here with glory fraught,
O Lord of all, by me shouldst Thou be thought.

18.

Detailed description of Thy virtues rare
And lordliness supreme Janārdan' fair !
Do Thou vouchsafe to me e'en once again,
No fill in Thy ambrosial speech I gain."

19.

The Lord replied " O best of Kurns !⁷ hear,
Of glories Mine divine—no end ! My dear ;
The chief ones hence alone shall I repeat—
A subject vast in language brief, to treat.

20.

That soul am I which, Arjun, e'er doth live
Within the heart of beings their life to give ;
Of creatures all the starting point, the end
And middle too am I—their only friend.

7. See Book I, note 50.

8. Best among the descendants of Kuru.

21-22:

E'en Vishnu I of all Aditi's⁹ breed,
Of lights the sun from which all rays proceed ;
Of winds¹⁰ Marichi I that moves so soon,
Of stars¹¹ am I the all resplendent moon,
The Sām of veds,¹² of gods as Vāsav¹³ reign,
Of organs¹⁴ mind am I, of beings the brain.¹⁵

23.

Of violent *Rudras*¹⁶ e'en the Sankar I,
The Lord of wealth¹⁷ in Me do all descri
'Mong demons, genii ; and of *Vasus*¹⁸ all
Am I the fire, of mountains Meru¹⁹ tall.

9. The A'dityas are twelve *devas* born of the sage Kasyapa in Aditi ; of these Vishnu is here referred to as the highest.

10. The wind gods are 49 in number of which Marichi is here referred to as the highest.

11. Loosely used in the sense of heavenly bodies. The ancient Hindus ofcourse knew the difference between stars, planets and satellites.

12. See Book IX, note 13.

13. Indra, the Chief of the *devas* ; see note 6 above.

14. The organs are eleven in number *viz.*, the five organs of sense, the five organs of action and the mind, of which the mind is here referred to as the highest ; see Book V, note 7.

15. Which is the seat of consciousness.

16. The *Rudras* are terrible *devas*, eleven in number of whom Sankara or Siva is here referred to as the highest.

17. Kubera the king of *Yakshas* is regarded as the lord of wealth and is here referred to as the highest amongst genii and demons (*yakshas* and *rakshasas*) taken together.

18. The *Vasus* are eight in number of which the fire-god is referred to here as the highest.

19. Meru is the noblest of mountains in Hindu mythological geography.

24-25.

Of priests the chief, O Pārtha, do thou see
 In Me the heavenly saint Vrihaspati;²⁰
 Of heroes Skanda²¹ I—of lakes the sea,
 Of sages Bhrigu²² great regard thou Me;
 Of words the one that's formed of letter one²³
 Which is in holiness surpassed by none;
 The rite of counting name²⁴ of rites am I,
 Of fixed existences Himálay high.

26.

The *Pepul*²⁵ 'mongst the trees, of heavenly saints
 The pious Nárada²⁶—lord of all restraints;
 Amongst the dainty fairies great and small
 Chitrarath²⁷ I, most handsome of them all;
 Of holy men that have their objects gained
 The sage Kapil²⁸ am I, from world unchained.

20. Vrihaspati is the priest of the *devas* of heaven.

21. Skanda or Kártic—the son of Siva, is the commander of the army of *devas* in heaven.

22. A great sage sprung from the skin of Brahmá.

23. A reference to the mystic syllable 'OM.' See Book VIII, 13 and the note under it.

24. Repeating some holy name or *mantra* with or without the help of beads.

25. The big tree of the fig order known as *Aswaththa* (*figus religiosus*—the sacred fig.)

26. Nárada is the greatest celestial *rishi*; he excels in music also.

27. The chief of the *Gandharavas*—a species of beautiful fairies.

28. The great sage who is said to have lived at the junction of the Bhágirathée with the sea (Ságor point) and propounded the Sámkhya philosophy.

27-28.

Of horses Me Uchchaisravá²⁹ do know
 Airábat³⁰ too of elephants high and low,
 Of men the king, of arms the thunder³¹ I,
 'Mong cows the one³² that things at will supply ;
 For work of birth am I Kandarpa³³ fair,
 Of deadly serpents all Vāsuki³⁴ rare.

29.

Of fangless snakes am I Ananta³⁵ named,
 'Mong those that live in water Varun³⁶ famed ;
 Of fathers dead their king Aryamá I
 Of rulers all Me Yama³⁷ do espy.

29. The best horse in existence, obtained during the churning of the ocean by the *devas* and the *asuras* combined. He is in the possession of Indra in heaven.

30. The best elephant in existence—obtained in the same way as Uchchaisravá and also in Indra's possession.

31. The most powerful weapon used by Indra, king of the *devas*.

32. Named Surabhi. This remarkable cow of the gods not only supplies milk whenever wanted but also supplies whatever is required of her. Her daughter Nandini has also similar powers.

33. The Hindu cupid, son of Vishnu.

34. The seven-headed serpent which, in Hindu mythology, carries the earth on one of its erected hoods.

35. Ananta, also called Sesha, is the king of the lower regions inhabited by venomless snakes.

36. Varun is the sea-god of Hindu mythology.

37. The Hindu Pluto—the god of death.

30.

E'en Prahlád³⁸ I among the demon's brood—
 Who else of those has ever proved so good ?
 Of counters, time and lion 'mong the beasts,
 'Mongst birds Vinatá's son³⁹ on snakes who feasts.

31.

Of those that swiftly go am I the wind,
 Of those who arms do bear am Rám⁴⁰ unkind
 The warrior's terror great, 'mong fishes e'en
 The *Makar*⁴¹ great, of streams the Gangá⁴² clean.

32.

Of creatures all beginning, middle, end,
 'Mong wisdoms I, the science of soul, My friend ;
 Of arguments⁴³ I am the most acute
 And fruitful form of good and warin dispute.

38. The extremely religious minded son of the demon King Hiranya Kashipu. Hiranya Kashipu hated the god Hari or Vishnu, but Prahlád adored Hari. For this reason the king very severely oppressed the boy and tried to kill him by various means. But the Lord saved the devoted boy and ultimately appeared in the man-lion form and killed the heartless father.

39. The giant bird Garuh on whom Vishnu rides.

40. Parasurám *i. e.*, the Rám who bore the axe and is said to have killed nearly all the Kshatriyas or members of the warrior caste on earth.

41. The shark, which is referred to here as the most powerful of fishes.

42. The goddess of the river Ganges is held by Hindus in the greatest veneration. To utter her name is an act of religious merit, not to speak of bathing in and drinking her water.

43. Arguments are of three kinds—*Jaipa*, *Bitandá* and *bád*. In the first each party supports its own point; in the second each party supports its own point and blames the other; the third is argument without personal feelings by which a conclusion is arrived at. This last form, *Bád*, is here referred to as the best.

33.

Of letters 'A'⁴⁴ and of *Samāses*⁴⁵ *dwond*,
I am unwasting time that knows no bond ;
Dispenser I and e'en the cause of all
Men's actions' surest fruits both great and small.

34.

E'en all devouring death am I ; the source
Of those that are to be in nature's course
In future dark ; among the women kind
Me, men as Fame and Speech and Memory find,
Forgiveness too and Beauty, Patience, Tact ;—
Thrice blest are they who friendship theirs contract.

35.

Of *Sāms*⁴⁶ I am the great, *Gáyatri*⁴⁷ sure
'Mong metres know thou Me so holy pure ;
Of months November⁴⁸ I, of seasons spring
When nature's face is fresh and birds do sing.

36.

Of all deceivers I the cunning die,
And power of powerful beings who else but I ?
Of victors conquest e'en, of those that try
To do their work, in Me exertion spy ;

44. The first vowel in almost all known alphabets.

45. *Samāsa* is a technical term of Sanskrit Grammar meaning the various ways of compounding words. There are several kinds of *Samāses* of which one, the *dwondā* is referred to here as the highest.

46. That is of the hymns of the *Sāma* Veda. The great *Sāma* is the hymn devoted to Indra, the king of the gods.

47. The name of a vedic metre which is here praised as the best.

48. The month in which rice is reaped—the happiest month of Indians and formerly the first month of the Hindu Calendar.

37.

38.

39.

40.

49. The name of the clan in which Krishna was born.
50. Arjun is here referred to as the best of the five sons of Pāndu.
51. The learned sage who codified the vedas.
52. One of the great law-givers of Ancient India.

41.

All beings that are with lordly splendour crowned,
And all that are with light and vigour found
To flourish here, for certain do thou know
As fractions of My power, luxuriant grow.

42.

Or, Arjun ! what the good for thee to know
Varieties which in different forms do grow ?
That I exist, firm holding all in Me,
Sufficient knowledge is, My friend, for thee.

END OF BOOK X.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XI.

— 00 —

Arjun is greatly delighted to hear the description of superb lordliness. He requests Krishna to show him his lordly cosmic form. Krishna endows Arjun with divine vision to enable him to see it and then reveals that awful manifestation of Himself. Arjun sees it with intense wonder and admiration and falling prostrate, gives expression to his feelings in a very sublime hymn. Confounded and trembling with fear he asks Krishna who He is. Krishna replies suitably and Arjun overpowered with fear asks Krishna to assume His usual form. Krishna graciously does so and says that the cosmic form displayed to Arjun is a very rare sight obtainable only by unswerving devotion.

— — —

BOOK XI.

— 00 —

THE VISION OF THE COSMIC FORM.

And Arjun said " To do me good inclined,
The speech sublime on spirit and the mind
Mysterious, that Thou hast addressed to me
Hath cleared my doubts, from errors set me free.

2.

Extensive have I heard about the rise
And fall of beings, O Thou of lotus eyes,
Thy glory too, which doth no wastage know
But always in its native lustre glow.

3-4.

E'en sayest as Thou, Lord ! art Thou the same,
No doubt have I about Thy sacred fame ;
But yet, O Best of Beings, would I behold
Thy lordly image rare of wondrous mould ;
That I can bear the sight shouldst Thou opine
Do show me, Lord of yog, appearance Thine."

5.

To whom replied the Lord, " O Pârtha, see
The hundred thousand forms assumed by Me,
Of various kinds supreme, that glorious shine
In various colours bright, in figures fine.

6.

Observe *ádityas*¹ twelve, the *vasus*² strong,
The *rudras*,³ heavenly twins,⁴ and *maruts*⁵ throng ;
Unseen before and wondrous all untold,
Do thou, O Bharat's son,⁶ in Me behold.

7.

In this My body grand, Gudákes,⁷ see
E'en all the worlds today in harmony
Together placed ; see all thou fain wouldst find,
Within Myself I hold so well combined.

8.

By these thine eyes how'er thou canst not see
The lordly power supreme that rests in Me ;
Superior vision hence on thee bestow
Now I, in order all these sights to show."

9.

And Sanjai⁸ said " O King, soon after this'
The mighty Lord of yog of power and bliss,
Srikrishna, there to Arjun did unfold
His lordly image grand of wondrous mould.

1. A'dityas, see Book X, note 9.

2. Vasus, see Book X, note 18.

3. Rudras, see Book X, note 16.

4. The two Aswinikumárs, who are famous for their beauty and skill in medical science amongst the residents of heaven.

5. The wind-gods ; see Book X, note 10.

6. The word 'son' is used in the general sense of descendant.

7. A name of Arjun.

8. Sanjai said to Dhritaráshttra, the blind' king, what Krishna showed and Arjun saw.

10-11.

Unnumbered mouths and eyes and various sights
That none had seen, and gems of brilliant lights
Adorned the body strange; and various arms
That sparkling were and flourished spread their charms.⁹
Superbly clad, the neck by garlands graced,
And all the skin well-rubbed with sandal paste,
The form divine was grand without an end,
With mouths that did on every side extend.

12.

Should there a thousand suns appear on high
At once and by their fury fill the sky,
That light combined might prove as strong and bright
As that which shone from Him of heavenly sight.

13.

Together there, the worlds the Pándav saw
Divided into various parts, with awe,
In that frame of the God of gods, the great
That was in front in all its lordly state.

14.

With wonder filled and hair erect that stood,
Dhananjai then in true obeisant mood,
His head bent low, with folded hands did pray,
And humbly to the Lord these words did say.

15.

"In body Thine, O Lord, the gods I find,
And crowds of living beings of every kind,
E'en Brahmá's¹⁰ self, the lord on lotus sit,
All reptiles fair and saints so full of wit.

9. The construction is this: Mouths, eyes, sights, jewels, and arms adorned the body. The divine form superbly clad and with the skin well-rubbed was grand.

10. Brahmá is the first being created by the Supreme Spirit. He in his turn creates the universe. He is represented as having four faces and sitting on a lotus.

16.

With hands unnumbered, stomachs, mouths and eyes
Behold I Thee, eternal everywise ;
No end, beginning, middle Thine I spy—
All world Thy form, O Lord of earth and sky.

17.

With massive club and disc equipped and crowned,
A heap of brightness shining all around,
As light from blazing fire or sun now Thee,
A form too bright to look upon, I see.

18.

Unwasting Thou, the great that shouldst be known,
The prime support of all the worlds alone ;
Unspent Thou sure, protector of the true
Religion ; who all ages doth live through.

19.

Without beginning, end and middle too,
Of power unending, endless arms, I do
Behold Thee Lord ! with sun and moon Thine eyes,
And blazing flames that in Thy mouths do rise ;
Thus do Thou burn with fiery force Thine own
E'en all the worlds that are unknown and known.

20.

The space that intervenes between the sky
And this our world is filled entirely by
Thy dreadful presence grand, and all the sides ;¹¹
Within itself the universe it hides !
And doth, O Thou of mighty soul, impart
A pang of fear right through the three worlds' heart.

11. Endless space on every side *i. e.*, towards all points of the compass. 'Itself' and 'it' in the next line stand for 'presence.'

21.

O ! there the crowds of gods do enter thee,
Some pray in fear, with folded hands, I see ;
While others—saints successful—high do raise
Their voices ' Be it so ' and then recount thy praise.

22.

The *rudras*, *vasus*, *sādhyas*, *visvas* good,
The *aswin* twins, the winds, Aditi's brood,
Ancestors, fairies, gods of wealth, the lords,
And throngs of *siddhas*—free from all discords—
These full of awe, do all towards Thee gaze—
The object of their wonder and their praise.

23.

O Thou of mighty arms, beholding Thine
Appearance fierce and great in which combine
Unnumbered mouths and eyes and arms and feet
And thighs and stomachs too and teeth to eat—
A form in which a myriad creatures lie,
The world's do shake with fear and so do I.

24.

Observing Thine, O God pervading all,
Tremendous figure that appears so tall
As e'en to touch the sky and which doth shine
With various colours, and capacious Thine
Most awful open mouths so fiery deep,
And eyes so large and bright, I cannot keep
The balance of my mind and patience take ;
So much do these, O Lord, my courage shake.

25.

Thy mouths with horrid teeth observing, Sire,
That shine intense like that destructive fire

Which will at last creation all destroy,
 I fail to know the sides¹² and peace enjoy;
 May Thou O Lord of lords, all creatures' stay,
 Be pleased with me and so my fears allay.

26-27.

Look there, Dhritarâshtra's children¹³ rapid run
 With crowds of kings and Karn¹⁴ the carman's son,
 Within Thy mouths; and Bhishma¹⁵ Drona¹⁶ all,
 The heroes too, whom we¹⁷ our leaders call!
 And some, it is a dreadful sight to eye,
 With shattered heads between thy teeth do lie.

28.

As watery currents vast of rivers flow
 Towards the sea and enter it, e'en so
 The human heroes enter into Thine
 All burning mouths and leave behind no sign.

29.

As insects to the burning flame do run
 To meet destruction sure which others shun,
 With motion swift; so men with quickness fly
 Towards Thy mouths terrific—there to die.

12. That is which is north, which south and so on. This indicates loss of mental balance.

13. Sons one hundred in number of whom Duryedhana was the eldest; see introduction.

14. Karna see Book I, note 20.

15. See Book I, note 19.

16. See Book I, note 1.

17. We *i. e.*, the Pândava party.

30.

E'en lickest Thou as food the human throng
With burning mouths ; so fierce Thy rays, so strong,
That they do fill the world and lend it heat ;
Thou all pervading Lord, how strange Thy feat !

31.

Of awful figure such who art Thou, say !
O Best, O God, be pleased I bend to pray !
To learn Thee well, I wish—the First¹⁸ by far—
As know I not what Thine intentions are."

32.

The Lord replied " I am the dreadful death
The end of beings, to take away the breath
Of those assembled here engaged am I ;
On either side the troops thou dost descry,
Not one of them shall live excepting thee,
But all at last shall be devoured by Me.

33.

Hence do thou rise and fight thy foes again,
And kingdom vast and world wide fame attain ;
All these by Me already have been killed,
A seeming cause be thou, in left so skilled.¹⁹

34.

E'en Bhishma, Drona, Jayadratha²⁰ all,
And Karna too with others whom we call

18. The first Being from Whom everything has sprung.

19. Arjun was skilled in using the bow with his left arm. In this verse and the next Krishna resumes his exhortation to Arjun to fight. See Book II, stanza 3.

20. The husband of Duhsalá, the single sister of the one hundred sons of Dhritakáshtra.

Great fighting heroes—put to death by Me,
 Defeat thou once again and victor be ;
 Do bravely fight devoid of every fear,
 The victor of thy foes art thou, My dear.”

35.

Sanjai :

On hearing this from Keshav²¹ Arjun crowned,²²
 With folded hands and head that touched the ground
 And limbs that shook with terror sore distressed,
 And faltering voice again the Lord addressed.

36.

And said “ ’Tis fit,²³ O Lord ! thy holy praise
 When sung, in all the universe doth raise
 A feeling of delight and cheers the mind
 Of living creatures good of every kind ;
 By it great monsters fearing fly away
 To various parts and sages great do pray.

37.

Why should not we O endless, mighty Soul !
 O Lord of gods ! the world's supporting pole,
 Fall down to worship Thee ! Thou greater art
 Than Brahmá, and did life to him impart²⁴
 As great creator his ; secure from fall,
 Expressed and hidden²⁵ Thou—the root of all.

21. Keshav i. e., Krishna.

22. One name of Arjun is ‘ Kiriti ’ or the crowned.

23. Because You are so powerful and so kind, it is proper that the singing of Your praise should bring fear to the wicked and delight to the virtuous.

24. The idea of creation is that Brahmá first arose out of the Great Spirit and then Brahmá created the universe.

25. Expressed as the visible universe ; hidden as the cause of it.

38.

The God of gods art Thou, the Person old,
Supreme existence which all worlds uphold ;
As knower Thou dost all true knowledge own,
And Thou too that which shouldst by all be known ;
The best of rests, of wondrous cosmic frame,
The world is full of Thee from Whom it came.

39.

The Lord of waters, air and death and fire
And moon resplendent, Thou ; of beings the sire,
Great grandsire too ; a thousand times I bend
Before Thee, Lord, yea times without an end.

40.

In front, behind, I bend and all around
Thou sum of all, of endless force, profound ;
Unmeasured power Thine, in every place
Existest Thou and hence dost all embrace.

41.

A friend Thou art and equal, from this thought
That ever I pronounced unworthy aught ;
Familiar Thee addressed as ' Krishna mine'
Or ' yādab' ' friend,' not knowing glory Thine,
Impelled by error or by friendship close,
As always Thee did I my friend suppose ;

42.

In playing, sleeping, sitting, taking food,
When all alone or with our fellows good
That e'en in jest some slight I may have shown
To Thee of strength beyond all measure known ;—
For these and other sins that have arisen
May I O Achyut ! be by Thee forgiven.

43.

Of things that move and those that do not move
 Kind father Thou ; and also to improve
 Their knowledge true, a teacher great and more
 Art Thou O Lord ! their object to adore ;
 In all the threefold worlds no equal see,
 Then where to find a greater being than Thee ?

44.

Hence falling down prostrate O Lord ! before
 Thy feet divine, right like a stick, implore
 Thy favour I ; do Thou forbearance lend
 As father to his son and friend to friend,
 Just as a lover doth his mistress treat,
 E'en if she makes mistakes with kindness sweet.

45.

Unseen before, Thy figure seeing grand
 Delightful do I feel ; but also stand
 Afraid in mind, O Thou of worlds the stay !
 Do show Thy usual form ; be pleased, I pray.

46.

With shining *kirit* crowned and armed with wheel
 And club²⁶ I would Thee spy ; so do reveal
 O thousand handed Lord of cosmic make,
 Thy form with fourfold arms and this forsake."

47.

The Lord did say " By wondrous power divine,
 Have I, O Arjun, pleased with nature thine,

26. Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of whom Krishna is an incarnation is usually depicted in his four-handed or—the four hands holding respectively the conch, the wheel (cutting instrument), the club and the lotus.

My best form shown to thee with brightness fraught,
Of endless worlds the root, that ne'er was brought
Before the sight of earthly mortal man
Thyself apart, O blessed of thy clan.

48.

No ved's, nor rites, nor reading sacred scripts,
Nor virtuous acts, nor penance done, nor gifts,²⁷
To show another man can Me incline
Than thee, O Kuru chief ! this form divine.

49.

Do feel no pain, nor e'en confounded be
Observing this My form so fierce to see ;
Devoid of fear be thou and cheerful bold,
And thus my usual form again behold."

50.

With this good Vasu's son²⁸ to Arjun closed
His speech and then his usual form exposed ;
And in that graceful form, to him, afraid
With sweetness various words consoling said.

51.

And Arjun thus replied " Janárdan dear !
Observing figure Thine so full of cheer
That human is, my mind hath got its tone,
My heart has now regained its feelings own."²⁹

52.

The Lord did add ; " My form so fierce that thou
With terror great indeed hast witnessed now

27. The practice of charity.

28. Vasu's son *i. e.*, Krishna. He was the son of Vasudev of Dvārka.

29. Formerly all feelings were overshadowed by awe and fear.

E'en gods in heaven are anxious still to see ;
So rare a sight have I revealed to thee.

53.

In such My image grand as thou hast seen
No veds can show Me forth, no gifts, nor e'en
Ascetic's acts, nor rites performed with care ;
By none of these man sees a sight so rare.

54.

Devotion strong howe'er that doth not shake
O Arjun, fire of foes, can surely make
Me known and seen and also can secure
For men an entrance into Me 'tis sure.

55.

The doer of My works, who looks on Me
As life's sole end, who is devoted, free
From vile attachments, void of feelings ill
To creatures all, with ease acquires Me still."

END OF BOOK XI.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XII.



Krishna explains that the worship of a personal God is far easier than the tedious process of seeking an impersonal and inconceivable spirit. Devotion to a personal God is a sure way to attain the highest bliss. Those who are unable to concentrate the mind on God by devoted contemplation should again and again bring back the unstable mind to Him and thus gain success by constant practice. If again such practice is found too difficult one may engage in work but should restrict one's self to works which please God ; and this failing one may act as ordinary men do but should try to renounce fruits of action. Such renouncement leads to peace and the peaceful soul unattached and devoted, secures divine favour.



BOOK XII.

— 00 —

THE COMMUNION OF DEVOTION.

And Arjun said "Devoted men who see
Thy forms and virtues and do worship Thee,
And those who try by wisdom sheer to taste
The One beyond expression, free from waste—
Of these superior who in yogic art ?
Do Thou this knowledge rare to me impart."¹

2.

The Lord replied "Those lucky men divine
Excel in yog who all their thoughts confine
In Me alone and friend, to Me who pray
With deep devotion joined all night and day."²

3.

But seekers of the Great which knows no fall,
Beyond expression and description all,
Too high for thought, which all the world supports
Unmoved and fixed and in delusion sports ;

1. Arjun asks whether the worshippers of *Saguna Brahman* or the seekers of *Nirguna Brahman* are better ; in other words whether men should worship a personal God or try to realize an impersonal Supreme Spirit.

2. Krishna gives preference to the worship of a personal God with fervent devotion.

4.

Those men who do to others, great and small,
What good they can and rule their passions all,
Who see all equal and do none disdain
They too—the spirit seekers—Me attain.³

5.

The aim to deal with what expression lacks
Leads men, to bodies used, to tedious tracks ;
Pains greater thus must such devotees take
Whose minds do seek a God without a make.⁴

6.

But those that all their acts to Me resigned
Sincere attached do always in their mind
My nature contemplate and worship Me,
From other objects of devotion free ;

7.

Such men deliver I⁵ from this the sea
Of deadly wordliness, believe thou Me ;
With no delay, O Pārtha, as their friend,
I save the men who do on Me depend.

8.

So fix thy mind on Me, thy wisdom sure
As well thou place in Me ; and thus secure
Thy rest hereafter⁶ in existence Mine—
A state so full of peace and bliss divine.

3. Though the worship of a personal God is better yet those who earnestly seek the impersonal Spirit also gain salvation.

4. That is an impersonal God.

5. The idea is that those who seek an impersonal Spirit have to find salvation by tedious processes. But those who resign all actions in the Lord and become devoted to Him are saved without having to undergo such difficulties.

6. In the next world.

9.

If thou canst not a steady mind maintain
On Me and, Arjun, fail to Me attain,
By practice⁷ hard do thou desire and try
As teachers wise dictate, the truth to spy.

10.

In practice also shouldst thou luckless be
Engage thyself in work that pleaseth Me ;
For actions done for Me with all thy mind
Success divine, thy aim, do surely find.

11.

To do this e'en unable if thou art
Protection seek in Me and wish no part
Of actions' fruits ; be master of thy mind ;
Sigh not for objects aught, on Me resigned.

12.

Superior knowledge all to practice tell
Unwisely followed ; centered thoughts excel
E'en knowledge such ; extinction of desire
For actions' fruits excels the the vivid fire
Of mental sight ; from this doth sure proceed
Peace afterwards—the highest bliss indeed.⁸

7. The idea is that if the state in which the mind remains steadily fixed on the Lord cannot be attained at once, the worshipper should learn by practice to bring back the mind to the contemplation of the Lord as often as it digresses. See Book VI, stanza 26.

8. Practice, knowledge, contemplation and the giving up of desire for fruits of action are here described as being in ascending order of excellence. They are in fact successive stages. Patient practice of spiritual culture is good but when by that means knowledge of the Spirit has been gained there is a step in advance ; so also from knowledge to contemplation and from contemplation to the absolute giving up of desires.

13-14.

To creatures all unenvious, friendly; kind,
Unselfish, unattached, who same doth find
E'en weal and woe; contented firmly sure,
Forgiving, righteous, calm, devoted, pure,
Resigned to Me with all his wit and mind
Who lives to him am I for ever kind.

15.

From whom uneasy none, who doth not find
Another to destroy his peace of mind,
From joy and envy free, anxiety, fear
Who doth not know, to Me that man is dear.

16.

Above temptations all and skilful, pure,
Impartial, free from pains that men endure,
From all exertions too, devoted, he—
The blessed servant Mine—is dear to Me.

17.

Who envies none, nor doth elation show
Nor e'er regret nor thirsty wishes know,
Of good and ill resigned⁹ attached to Me
Belovéd creature Mine is certain he.

18-19.

To friends and foes the same, in honour high
And disregard no difference who doth spy

9. Resigned on God both as regards good and evil.

Who bears all heat and cold, all bliss and woe
With equal mind, attachment doth not know,
With silence unconcerned who praises hears,
Abuses too fall equal to whose ears,
Content with what he gets and homeless, pure
And firm who is, is dear to Me know sure.

20.

Immortal virtue this¹⁰ described by Me
The men that practise still, devoted free,
Attached to Me regardful servants Mine
Are dear to Me extreme, so I opine."

END OF BOOK XII.

10. Devotion.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XIII.

—00—

On being requested by Arjun, Krishna explains the doctrine of soil and its knower. The body is the soil and the Lord Himself is installed in the body as the consciousness by which it is known. The twenty-four Sámkhya principles are the elements of the soil *viz.*, the first principle, reason, sense of I and mine, the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, mind, the five subtle elements and the five coarse elements. Desire, dislike, happiness, sorrow &c., are the various conditions of the soil. The twenty virtues which lead to true knowledge are then enumerated. The object to be known is the Great Spirit.

Having explained the soil, knowledge and the object to be known, Krishna proceeds to discuss the relation between the soil and its knower that is, between Nature and the Person who animates it. Both are beginningless—conditions and virtues all arise from Nature. Nature acts, the Person enjoys happiness and sorrow. But Nature acts only on account of the Person's proximity or close relation to her and the Person enjoys only on account of Nature's proximity or close relation to him. Everything in the world is born of the union of Nature and the Person. The Person though thus existing in intimate combination with Nature is on account of his subtleness, pure and untouched.

BOOK XIII.

— 99 —

THE COMMUNION OF NATURE AND THE PERSON.

And Arjun spake " O Keshab, do Thou say
What matter is and Person too I pray ;
What's soil again ? Whom men its knower call ?
And knowledge with its objects even all ?
Deep subjects such as these fain would I know ;
Do Thou explain and light upon them throw.

2-3.

The Lord replied " O Kunti's son, do hear,
This body gross is called the soil, My dear ;
And he its knower named by learned men
Who body such with wisdom's eye do ken.
In bodies all, O Bhárat, do thou know
I as the knower, e'en their soul, do grow ;
The knowledge of the soil, its knower too,
In My opinion is the knowledge true.

4.

What that soil is, like what, by what doth change
And whence doth it arise—existence strange—
And who that knower is, what glory he
And whence doth gain in brief thou hear from Me ;

5.

In various metres¹ sung by saints in ways
Diverse, in texts² that point to God and lays

1. The word used in the original is *chhandovih* which may mean 'in various metres' or 'in the several vedas.'

2. Texts and lays refer to the sayings in the great *Upanishads* or philosophical treatises.

That also Him to human wit expose,
So certain and replete with reasons close.³

6-7.

The elements five, their cause the self-conceit,
And wisdom and the sole primeval seat
Of virtues ; senses ten and one ; the five
That are by them perceived ;⁴ and what do drive
All men to action's field—of will the force
And envy, bliss and woe, the body coarse,
Perception, patience ; these the soil so strange
With ways in which it often times doth change.

8.

For honour want of care, and want of pride,
Forgiveness too, a heart in which abide
Sincerity and reverence for one's own
Preceptor wise and pureness fully blown,
With fixedness of purpose, self-control
And kindness which doth elevate the soul ;

9.

Indifference to the senses' objects all
And freedom from conceit which men enthrall,⁵
And knowledge of the ills and griefs on earth
That lie in death, disease, decay and birth ;

3. The connection of this stanza with the preceding one is this : Krishna is going to relate in brief the knowledge which has been sung in detail by former sages in the scriptures.

4. From the beginning of the stanza upto this the twenty-four *tatvas* or existences which make up nature are enumerated. See notes under Book III, stanza 4. Then follow the ways in which it changes. 'The body coarse' means the propensities of the body.

5. To which ordinary men are subject.

10-11.

An absence of attachment to one's son
 And wife and home and feelings for them none
 In woe and weal ; an equalness of mind—
 In fortune and distress in peace resigned
 And free from painful thoughts ; devotion too
 That knows diversion none, to Me so true ;
 A love of solitude, a mood of mind
 That in society doth no pleasure find ;

12.

A leaning to the spirit's wisdom high,
 The end of actual knowledge still to spy,⁶
 These⁷ only knowledge⁸ are that I have shewn,
 All else as darkest ignorance are known.

13.

Of knowledge now the object shall I say,
 Aware of which thou shalt without delay
 Deliverance find, eternal life of bliss ;
 Without beginning He, the God of this
 Whole universe—Great Brahman glory-lit—
 Who can't be proved or else disproved by wit.

14-15.

With faces, hands and feet, and many a head,
 Eyes, ears on every side, o'er all He's spread ;
 In workings of the senses doth He live
 And e'en to them their active functions give,

6. A leaning to see and realize that salvation is the object of true knowledge.

7. The twenty virtues enumerated above *viz.*, 9, 3, 3, 3 and 2 respectively in the five stanzas ending in this.

8. Knowledge *i. e.*, means of acquiring true knowledge.

And yet devoid Himself of senses' thrall,
Is unattached, but master sole of all ;
From threefold virtues⁹ though Himself so free,
Supporter is He yet of all the three.¹⁰

16.

As outside He of things, their inside so—
Of those that move and those that cannot go ;
Beyond all knowledge He for being fine,¹¹
At distance too and near doth always shine.

17.

In creatures all divided doth He rest,
Without division too in every breast ;¹²
Protector He of all unknown and known,
Creator and destroyer, all alone.

18.

The light of lights, beyond illusion's reach,
And knowledge bright is He, the *yogis* teach ;
Is one that should be known and can be got
By help of knowledge sure if closely sought ;

9. Threefold virtues. See note under Book II stanza 45, and Book VII stanza 12.

10. The idea in this stanza is this : God has no body and senses but as our body and senses are only for working and knowing and He is all powerful and omniscient, He may be said to possess bodies and senses without number. Thus to say that He sees everything is to say that he has eyes everywhere and so on. He it is who makes our eyes see, our ears hear &c., but He Himself requires no senses.

11. Fine? *i. e.*, subtle, as being the cause of all things. If we take anything and enquire the cause of it, the cause of that cause and so on, the thought soon becomes too subtle to follow. God as the ultimate link in this chain of causes is unknowable.

12. He is undivided in all creatures as the common cause from which every one of them springs ; but as the effect itself He is divided.

Within the heart of all doth He reside
As master theirs supreme and special guide.

19.

Thus soil and knowledge with what should be known
In brief have I to thee exposed and shewn ;
Acquainted with these truths devotee Mine
My spirit doth attain so pure divine.

20.

Without beginning do thou Nature¹³ know—
Eternal field of work ; eternal so
The Person¹⁴ too ; the body, feelings all,
The virtues three arise at Nature's call.

21.

Of acts and actors, means, the source and cause
The wise men say is naught but Nature's laws ;
Of feeling weal and woe the root supreme
Is e'en the Person sure the sages deem.¹⁵

13. That which has been described above as soil consisting of twenty-four prime existences and their developments. See stanzas 6-7 above.

14. The spirit which is separate from Nature.

15. The idea in this stanza is a well-known doctrine of the Sāmkhya philosophy. All acts proceed from Nature. (See definition of soil in stanzas 6-7 above.) But the fruits thereof are enjoyed or borne by the spirit or Person. Of course, Nature acts only because of her proximity to and connection with the spirit. She cannot act by herself. So also the Person enjoys the fruits of action only because of his connection with Nature, for the pure Spirit is incapable of feeling pleasure or pain and is changeless.

22.

In Nature placed, the Person doth partake
Her virtues¹⁶ all and surely this doth make
Him act; that birth he takes both good and ill
Is thus because he's joined to senses still.

23.

The Person, while he lives in this your frame
On which act Nature's laws, is not the same
As Nature's self; a witness only he
That doth approve, supporteth, ruleth free,
The lord supreme; and spirit great is named
Distinct from all that is as Nature famed.

24.

The Person thus and matter with its three
Associate virtues¹⁷ who doth truly see,
That man, whate'er the state wherein he be
From future birth, O friend, is always free.

25.

Some men observe the spirit by a sight
That is superior far—the inner light
Within themselves; and some by study hard
Of matter and of Person, with regard;
And others are who see this spirit sure
By acts that are from thirst of fruits secure.

16. Enumerated in stanzas 6-7 above. The idea is that the Person by his connection with Nature (which includes senses &c.,) partakes of happiness, sorrow and various other feelings. This leads to action and action leads to fresh births.

17. See note 9 above.

26.

Unknowing some howe'er from others hear
 And worship ; even they, with perfect cheer,
 The listeners to their teachers easy go
 Beyond the sea of death,¹⁸ so full of woe.

27.

Or moving or unmoving, everything,
 That takes its birth in nature vast, doth spring
 From union of this soil, O Bhárat sage,
 And what its knower¹⁹ is, in every age.

28.

That man observes aright who clearly sees
 That God supreme doth dwell in creatures these²⁰
 E'en all the same ;²¹ that He alone in all
 The dying worlds doth rest without a fall.

29.

By seeing God the same in every place
 Man knows he cannot die²²—the child of grace ;
 And hence with ease extreme doth he attain
 The highest state devoid of every pain.

18. They gain a state in which death is unknown.

19. That is the Person or spirit.

20. These that we see in creation from the highest to the lowest.

21. Without change.

22. Those that do not see the eternal spirit pervading the universe must feel that all is want and darkness after death. Thus the Isha Upanishad says that unbelievers in the spirit go after death to a sunless and intensely dark clime. Those, on the other hand, who see the eternal and undying spirit in everything can attain a bright and glorious state after death.

30.

“By nature are performed all works and none
 By self-exertion mine is ever done”
 The man who thus observes doth truly see
 The state of things exact, from errors free.²³

31.

When all the things that live, in one combined,
 A man doth see, and their expansion²⁴ find
 From one—the same—attaineth union he
 With Brahman's self, from bonds for ever free.

32.

Corruption doth not touch, O Kunti's son,
 This spirit grand beginning which hath none,
 Nor active virtues e'en ; it acteth not,
 And though in bodies placed is never touched by
aught.

33.

Though present everywhere the subtle sky
 From fineness yet all contact doth defy,
 The spirit so residing void of caro
 In bodies all their virtues doth not share.

34-35.

A single sun doth fill the world with light,
 The spirit bright so opes the soil to sight ;
 The men who thus distinctly do espy
 The soil and knower true with wisdom's eye,
 And also how redemption to secure
 From matter's virtues, bliss attain 'tis sure.

END OF BOOK XIII.

23. The reader must be guarded against the idea that this is equivalent to saying that man should not exert himself.

24. All living things emanate from Nature at the time of creation and are absorbed in it at the time of final destruction or *pralaya*.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XIV.

— 00 —

Nature is the great womb into which the Eternal Spirit throws the seed of consciousness. All living things arise in this way. The threefold virtues of Nature—bright, forcing and dark—bind the being when it resides in the body ; the first by producing an attachment for pure pleasure and true knowledge, the second by producing a desire for action and the third by producing an inclination to inertness and sleepy delusion. When the work of every sense brings in light and knowledge, we know that the bright elements in the man predominate ; the existence of keen desires and a restlessness to act indicate the predominance of the forcing virtues ; while ignorance, delusion and errors indicate that the dark virtues are the most powerful. The souls with bright virtues go higher, those with forcing virtues remain where they are, while souls with dark inclinations sink to the lower regions. To gain salvation a man must rise above the influence of all the three kinds of virtue. Arjun enquires the signs by which such a man can be known. Krishna replies that when a man can let the three virtues of Nature operate on him without the least trace of being affected thereby and when his mind is not moved by anything, then we know that he has risen above the three-fold virtues. Such a man regards gold and clay, worldly happiness and misery with equal unconcern and concentrates all his devotion on the Lord alone.

BOOK XIV.

— oo —

THE COMMUNION OF THE DIVISION OF THE THREE VIRTUES.

The Lord did say "To thee do I again
The knowledge best of knowledges¹ explain ;
Aware of which the sages pure have found
The best success—salvation's bliss profound.

2.

By help of knowledge this attaining Mine
Own nature pure so faultless and divine,
Birth at creation's time do men forgo
And at the end of things no change they know.²

3-4.

Vast nature is the womb in which I sow
The seed³ of life ; all, Bhárat, thence do grow ;

1. The reader must have noticed that it is usual in books of this kind to extol the subject matter of a chapter at the beginning of it, to secure the devoted attention of the reader.

2. When a man has learnt and practised the knowledge described in this chapter, he rises above birth and death. At the time of the next creation he will not be born as a part of the created world and consequently he will have to suffer no death at the time of the destruction or *pralaya*. He becomes identified with the one eternal existence which exists unchanged through eternal time.

3. The reflection of the Spirit, by which Nature becomes living. The idea is that all life is the result of a combination of matter and spirit.

The creatures that are born, O Kunti's son,
In various forms, save nature have they none
Their mother true ; their only father I
Who still to all of them their seeds supply.

5.

Bright, forcing, dark, the powerful virtues three⁴
That take their birth from nature, tell I thee,
The eternal wasteless soul do helpless bind
Thou strong of arms ! in body close confined.

6.

Of these, O sinless,⁵ from their nature clear
The virtues bright so full of peace and cheer,
Do bind the spirit great with bonds of bliss,
With wisdom too to dive in truth's abyss.

7.

Of strong attachments formed, the forcing⁶ know
That from desire and worldly thirst do grow ;
These Kunti's son ! the bodied soul do bind,
By action's shackles dire of every kind.

8.

The darksome⁷ born of want of knowledge sure
Know thou ; from these doth bodied soul endure

4. See Book II, verse 45 and the note thereto.

5. The idea is that a soul subject chiefly to the bright virtues gains a state of knowledge and happiness ; and an attachment for that state naturally grows and binds the soul.

6. The forcing virtues.

7. The dark virtues.

Deception false ; these bind it, Bhárat dear,
By errors, laziness and sleep so drear.

9.

The virtues bright, O Bhárat, tend to bliss,
The forcing lead to action dire in this
Our world ; the darksome hiding wisdom's face
Drive men to errors blind that cause disgrace.

10.

The virtues bright, at times defeat the two,
The forcing virtues and the dark ones too
And flourish safe ; the forcing in their turn,
The bright ones and the darksome beat and earn
A triumph ; and the virtues dark again
Oft o'er the other two dominion gain.

11.

On all the doors⁸ of the corporeal frame
When light of knowledge shines with lustrous flame,
'Tis then that thou shouldst know the brightsome
pure,
Ascendant hath become of virtues sure.

12.

Covetousness and yearning, constant start⁹
In work and an unsatiate wishful heart,
O Bhárat sage, observed in men are these,
When forcing virtues do in them increase.

8. When the senses are controlled by the mind and their action instead of causing distraction as usual, helps the person in attaining true knowledge.

9. An intense desire to act for worldly objects and constantly beginning actions in accordance therewith.

13.

Sheer want of judgment, idle habits vain,
 Delusive vision, blind attachments' chain,
 Prevail in man when darksome virtues grow ;
 O Kuru's son, this knowledge do thou know.

14-15.

The men who die when brightsome virtues reign,
 The wished-for home¹⁰ of righteous sages, gain ;
 If one perchance should meet with one's decease
 When forcing virtues in the mind increase,
 One would one's birth among such people take
 As actions love and live for glory's sake ;
 When darksome virtues grow, the man that dies
 For birth, to lowly brutal bodies hies.

16.

Of acts from virtues bright the fruits are pure,
 Of forcing virtues woeful, know this sure ;
 Of actions that from darksome virtues rise
 The end is ignorance, so say the wise.

17.

For brightness¹¹ knowledge breeds, the forcing bring
 Temptations strong, and false delusions spring

10. Observe that they gain heaven but not salvation. Salvation is the lot of only those who rise above all the three kinds of virtue.

11. The bright virtues.

With blind attachment from the virtues dark,
Of vile degraded men the surest mark.¹²

18.

Toward the brightsome virtues those that tend
To regions high celestial do ascend,
Those whom the forcing rule, they midway stay,
While down they sink whom virtues dark do sway.

19.

When actor none besides the virtues three
Observes a seer, and Me from virtues free,
The lucky man then wins My nature pure—
The highest state a mortal can secure.

20.

The spirit gone beyond these virtues three
Of body born—becomes entirely free
From birth and death, disease and sorrows keen,
And bliss immortal gains, salvation e'en."

21.

And Arjun thus¹³ "O Lord, do say to me
The signs by which are known the sages free
Beyond three virtues¹⁴ who have made their way,
Their practice and the means they use, I pray."

12. The nature of the fruits of the three classes of virtue is described in stanza 16; the reasons why each class of virtue has a particular kind of fruit are explained in stanza 17.

13. Practically the same question was asked in Book II, stanza 54 and replied to in the stanzas following.

14. The three classes of virtue *viz.*, bright, forcing and dark alluded to above.

22.

The Lord replied " The light of knowledge bright,
And leanings too, attachment dark as night,
When act themselves, the man that would not hate,
Nor long for them in their inactive state ;

23.

Who sits as unconcerned and does not shake
At virtues' work but knows these always take
Their wonted course, and thus retains his peace
Unmoved and firm, in comfort and at ease ;

24.

Regarding weal and woe the same who lies
Within himself, and looks with equal eyes
A lump of earth or stone and one of gold,
To things one loves and hates nor warm nor cold,
Who, victor of his passions, calm doth hear
Reproach unkind and praise with equal cheer ;

25.

Unmoved by honour high, dishonour yile,
On friends and foes who looks with gracious smile,
Devoid of all attempts to do a deed,¹⁵
That man is called from virtues free indeed.

15. It is not that he does not work, but he does not work with a sense that he is the doer.

26.

And also Me who serves with full regard
And knows and thinks of none—condition hard—
At last from virtues these entirely free,
My nature high divine obtaineth he.

27.

As I, the Deity's seat, the resting place
Of what immortal is and form the base
Of that which wasteth not, of piety old,¹⁶
And bliss extreme within Me do I hold.

END OF BOOK XIV.

16. Everlasting.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XV.

— 00 —

Krishna says that this world to which we are all bound is like a large inverted Popul tree. God, the main root of it is on high; the various living beings, high and low, are its large and small branches. These branches are sustained by the sap of the threefold virtues which permeate the creation. And just as twigs hang from branches, so the objects of senses hang as it were from the senses of the beings who represent the branches. He who can cut this tree with the axe of asceticism, *i. e.*, can clearly see that the world is nothing but a manifestation of the Great Spirit, gets the state from which there is no return. That state is a bright one but its brightness is not like that of any known light *e. g.*, of the sun, moon or fire. That such a state is attainable is sure, for whatever we see in this world is really a manifestation of the Great Spirit Itself. Those that are wise can see and recognise It. This world apparently consists of two main elements—wasting *i. e.*, changing matter and unwasting consciousness. There is an existence higher and subtler than both—the Great Spirit of which both matter and man-spirit are manifestations. Those having true knowledge contemplate this Great Spirit.

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BOOK XV.

—oo—

THE COMMUNION OF THE BEST PERSON.

With roots on high and branches hung below
The wasteless *Pepul*¹ tree is said to grow ;
The metres form its leaves and he who knows
The wondrous growth his vedic knowledgo shows.

2.

E'en up and [down² its branches free extend,
The virtues three³ as water do them tend,

1. This *pepul* tree—a species of fig tree common in India—represents the creation. The metaphor is vedic. God, the ultimate cause of all things, is the root. Hence the root is said to be on high. The successive stages of evolution through which the Supreme Spirit manifests Itself are the branches. The vedas, composed in various metres, by prescribing various beneficial rites, make the creation the pleasant abode of all and are therefore compared to the shady leaves. In fact, if the student will refer to the table given in note 2, Book VII, he will clearly see the elements of creation in the shape of an inverted tree. The Supreme Spirit is to be placed as the ultimate root above *Prakriti* and various objects of creation springing from the elements are to form an infinite network of branches extending below.

2. Corresponding to the high and low classes of created beings.

3. The created beings being branches, the three virtues *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* must be the sap which nourishes them. Again created beings are always connected by their senses with worldly objects. The worldly objects are therefore the twigs connected with the branches of a tree.

The worldly objects as their twigs appear ;
 And aerial roots that high and low adhere
 To them and join them to the earth, they are
 The bonds of actions dire, distressing far.⁴

3-4.

Its form cannot on earth below be seen,
 Without beginning, end, position e'en
 It is ; this mighty tree of sturdy root
 Cut down with firmness thou e'en at its foot
 By axe of self-control ; and try to find
 The state which got—the bliss of human kind—
 To this our world of pain and care, so vain
 And full of woe, one never comes again.

5.

Devoid of selfish pride, attachment blind,
 The men that rule their passions with their mind,
 Who seeking spirit's truth, from mind have dropped
 Desires, in whom all conflicts⁵ have stopped,
 These men of wisdom do undoubted gain
 The state divested of all worldly pain.

6.

That state supreme attained none e'er again
 Reverts to birth and worldly pleasures vain ;
 'Tis bright, but sol lights not that state divine,
 Nor moon nor fire can e'er upon it shine.

4. The idea is that just as aerial roots of the *Pepul* tree binds the branches with the earth, so the bonds of action bind created beings to the world.

5. Who has risen above the disturbance produced in ordinary minds by the conflict of different feelings *e. g.*, happiness and misery, hope and despair &c.

7.

It is a part of Me, eternal, sure,
That lives as spirit in the world secure,
And mind and senses placed in matter⁶ draws
To feed on worldliness and obey its laws.

8.

When leaves a body old a new assumes
This spirit-lord ; as takes away perfumes
The wind from scented things, the same we find
The spirit takes the senses and the mind.⁷

9.

When in the ears, the skin, the tongue, the eyes,
The nostrils too and mind, this person lies,
He feeds on objects then of worldly taste
That tempting are, but ever found unchaste.⁸

10.

In changing bodies or in one confined,
Enjoying objects and by virtues lined,
This spirit, foolish men can never spy ;
But such alone as see by wisdom's eye.

11.

This spirit, trying hard, the sages wise
Within their bodies see with inward eyes ;

6. The student will have observed that mind, senses &c., are supposed by the Sāṃkhya philosophy to form part of Nature. See table in note 2, Book VII.

7. What goes with the spirit is not the gross material senses which of course remain with the dead body but the subtle power of acting through them.

8. Because they hinder the attainment of salvation.

While those that do not know this being true,
Though trying hard can never find its clue.

12.

The brightness in the sun and moon and fire,
Enlightens which the universe entire,
Know thou for sure is all effulgence Mine,
O'er everything that doth resplendent shine.

13-14.

Within the earth My way I also find
And there by strength all life of every kind
Sustain ; as moon, the source of moisture⁹ good,
I grow the crops, of living things the food ;
As fire internal I in creatures rest
And with the inner winds¹⁰ the fourfold food¹¹ digest.

15.

I live within the hearts of creatures all,
From Me remembrance,¹² knowledge and their fall ;
By all the holy texts, the Person sole
That should be known am I, the final goal
Of knowledge true ; the author also Me
Of vedic lore observe, its knower free.

9. The idea that the moon is a source of moisture and helps in the growth of plants is frequently met with in Sanskrit poetry.

10. Of the various inner winds of the human body spoken of in the *Tāntric* cult, *Prāṇ*, and *Apāṇ* the ones useful in effecting digestion, are referred to here.

11. Food is classified into four main varieties in Sanskrit works ; viz., those that have to be chewed, sucked, licked and drunk respectively.

12. Power or faculty of remembering.

16.

Two persons do exist, so people say,
 One wastage knows, the other no decay ;
 The first is matter¹³ dead that blindly goes,
 And lesser soul is what no wastage knows.

17.

There is a Person too, superior far
 To both, the soul supreme, whose virtues are
 The best ; this lord without decay pervades
 The three-fold worlds which He supports and shades.

18.

As I beyond the wasting¹⁴ live secure,
 And also do excel the wasteless¹⁵ pure,
 In veds and worlds am I the the person best
 By sages called, who find in Me their rest.

19.

And Me, the Person best, the man who knows,
 From blind attachments free, to Me he grows
 Devoted and resigned, in every sense ;
 And gains all knowledge too, O Bhárat thence.

20.

Mysterious is this science exposed by Me
 O Bhárat's son, from sins for ever free !
 Aware of it one should be wise, informed,
 And such as have no duties unperformed."¹⁶

END OF BOOK XV.

13. The ignorant people mistake the body as a person liable to death.

14. Material body.

15. The spirit in created things.

16. When one has known this knowledge he becomes wise and leaves no duty unperformed.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XVI.

— 00 —

Krishna enumerates the twenty-six forms of godly wealth and the six forms of demoniac wealth. The former lead to liberation and the latter to rebirth. The ignorance, hotheadedness, insatiable desire and delusion of the men with demoniac character are then described. In the end Krishna advises Arjun to follow the sacred books and control himself; for recklessly free action without any wholesome check may lead a man to the demoniac turn of mind and cause his ruin.

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BOOK XVI.

—oo—

ON THE DIVISION OF GODLY AND DEMONIAK QUALITIES.

And thus the Lord "O Arjun, want of fear,
Desire to knowledge gain and mental cheer,
Control of senses and the practice good
Of charity and rites and studious mood,
Devotion, straightness, want of cruel vice,
And truth with wrathlessness and sacrifice,
And calmness, rectitude and kindness broad
To creatures all which wise men e'er applaud,
And want of greed and virtuous mildness fair,
With modesty and settled wisdom rare ;

3.

Forgiveness, patience, pureness, good will, might,
And want of vanity of loathsome sight ;
All these¹ are godly wealth for beings that take
Their birth, O Bhárat dear, for virtues' sake.

4.

Pretensions vain for pious life and pride,
Conceit and wrath and roughness side by side,

1. The twenty-six qualities enumerated above are possessed by men who are born for leading a life full of the bright or godly elements.

And want of knowledge, Pártha, all² comprise
 Demoniac wealth for mortals e'er unwise.

5.

The godly wealth delivers all from bond³
 The demons' wealth doth bind the creatures fond ;
 Do not uneasy be, good luck is thine
 O Pándav, born art thou in wealth divine.⁴

6.

Two sorts of creatures here we always see,
 The one with godly nature pure and free,
 The other demon-like ; of these have I
 The godly full described, and now do try
 The demon-like to state, O Pártha, hear
 Instructive doctrine this so wise and clear.

7.

The fools demoniac have those feelings none
 By which men virtues court or vices shun ;
 No pureness, custom good, no truth is found
 Among these luckless men, so hopeless bound.⁵

8.

These call the world unreal, void of rule,
 Without its lord, in chance's hand a tool ;
 Born mere of sexes joined—the fruit of lust,
 And nothing here these luckless mortals trust.

2. The qualities enumerated in this stanza are possessed by men whose life is full of the forcing and dark elements. The three classes of elements of creation—bright, forcing and dark—have been adequately explained in the preceding chapters.

3. Of birth.

4. You are born to a life full of the bright elements and shall get deliverance.

5. To worldliness.

9.

The foolish men depending on such thought,
Their souls do lose⁶ and full with impulse fraught,
Live in this world in sin—its curses they,
As causes of destruction and decay.

10.

A prey to wishes that can ne'er be gained,
With pride, conceit, vain glory full maintained,
Who taking vows absurd, by means impure
Please lower gods and selfish ends secure ;

11.

Unmeasured painful thoughts till death that last,
The men that suffer from, in troubles cast,
Who think their aim of life desire to gain,
And nothing else but this⁷ who sure maintain ;

12.

Firm tied by countless bonds of hope who live,
Desire and anger whom their nature give,⁸
Of sensual objects all to have a share
Who seek to wealth amass by means unfair ;

13.

'This wish have I fulfilled to-day, again,
That other cherished bliss shall I attain ;

6. That is give up their souls to the demon of sin.

7. The gaining of gross desires.

8. Whose nature is always characterized by anger and unfulfilled desires.

This wealth my own, that also will be mine .
So into one, the two shall I combine ;

14.

Destroyed have I that foe, shall more destroy,
The lord am I, the person to enjoy,
Successful I, endowed with every might,
All pleasures do I own, as if by right ;

15.

Of riches master great, in birth so high,
Who ever doth exist on earth as I ?
I shall perform the rites, shall give, enjoy,
The men whom want of knowledge thus decoy ;

16.

Whose minds do roam on things of various kinds,
Attachment blind and vain whom hopeless binds,
To sensual joys enslaved who souls do sell ;—
Such men⁹ do sink in deep and loathsome hell.

17.

Vain, full of self-applause and riches' pride,
And seeking glory with conceit their guide,
Most selfish they, by rites to raise their fame
Do practise useless works, in worship's name.

18.

Brimful of self-conceit, false vigour, boast,
Desire and anger too they trouble¹⁰ most ;

9. As have been described in stanzas 10-16.

10. For instance by animal sacrifice and so on. The divine element in man is undoubtedly shocked at the brutal slaughter of animals in the name of religion.

Revilers of the good, e'en Me, Who rests
As life in bodies theirs or others' breasts.

19.

These men rebellious, hard, of men the worst
In all the world, do I incessant thrust
In demons' frames, of evil fruits the source,
To run in bodies such their wicked course.

20.

Demoniac bodies got, of evil fate
The fools, O Kunti's son, attain a state
Degraded most, to numerous births consigned,
Of Me deprived, Whom no such men can find.

21.

The spirit's death, the three-fold door of hell,
Are vain desires, temptation, anger fell ;
Hence these should men all shun, the fatal three
And render thus themselves from troubles free.

22.

O Kunti's son, avoiding three-fold these,
The doors infernal dark, doth man with ease
And gladness work his spirit's good and this¹¹
Enables him to gain the highest bliss.

11. Desire and the other two evils arising from it viz., greed and anger being conquered man can and does work for his spiritual good.

23.

The man regardless who of laws divine
Prescribed in sacred books, doth free resign
Himself to wanton acts, 'tis not his¹² fate
Success to win, nor bliss, nor *Yogi's* state.

24.

Hence what to do, what not, to this decide
The holy scriptures are thy faithful guide ;
Of doctrines told therein, thus full aware
Thou wilt in actions thine with safety fare."

END OF BOOK XVI.

12. Because he cannot give up desires.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XVII.

—oo—

Arjun wants to know the nature of those who do not follow any books but worship earnestly according to the light within them. Krishna says that such men may be classified, according to the virtues which rule them, as of bright, forcing or dark turn of mind. In fact, the inclinations of a man, which depend on his previous acts and condition, constitute his individuality. The men in whom the bright elements predominate worship gods, those of the forcing virtues worship *yakshas* and *rákshasas* (beings possessed of super-human wealth and power), while those in whom the dark elements are the most powerful worship devils and goblins. They are really thoughtless and cruel who ruin their health by excessive austerities. Food, rites, penance, charity are each of three kinds—bright, forcing and dark—according to the virtues from which they originate or which they promote. The meaning of the sacred name of God '*Om tat sat*' is then explained.

—

BOOK XVII.

— 00 —

ON THE DIVISION OF THE THREE KINDS OF INCLINATION OF MAN.

—

Arjun :

Regardless¹ of the sacred writings who,
With earnestness howe'er their worship do,
On virtue which their actions here do stay—
Bright, forcing or the dark ? O Krishna say.

2.

The Lord replied "Of those that bodies own,
The bents by nature's laws are three-fold known—
The brightsome, forcing and the beastly dark ;²
Each kind of bent thou hear, of each the mark.

1. In Book XVI, verse 23, it has been explained that those who are regardless of the sacred books and at the same time act wantonly cannot acquire true knowledge or get rid of desire. It is now proposed to discuss the position of those who are regardless of sacred books, but at the same time worship earnestly in accordance with the inclinations of their mind.

The reply in the next stanza though general has special application to the class of men about whom the question is asked. Those that have real and effective regard for sacred books render their inclinations pure by culture. To those who have no such culture the reply fully applies.

2. The dark virtues represent absolute want of knowledge and can hence also be called beastly.

3.

The bents turn on the man's conditions past—
 The bents are moulds in which the man is cast ;
 And if of men the bents observe you true,
 You know them all, O Bhárat, who is who.

4.

The brightsome³ worship gods, the forcing do
 Adore the genii and the monsters too,
 To ghosts and goblins all, the darksome pray—
 The men of beastly bent—the learned say.

5.

The vain, conceited men, impelled by force,⁴
 Attachment and desire, that have recourse
 To penance hard—by scripture none prescribed,
 And hardships self-inflicted, self-contrived ;

6.

The heartless, weaken who the matter-group
 Within their frame,⁵ nay, cause Myself⁶ to droop,
 Of creatures all that live on earth below
 Demoniac cruel are, thou surely know.

7.

The food that all prefer is three-fold too,
 And charity and rites and penance true ;

3. Men bent on bright virtues. So also 'forcing' and 'darksome' in this stanza mean men respectively bent on those virtues.

4. Some irresistible tendency.

5. Of which his body is built.

6. Who exist in them as the spirit.

Detailed description theirs attentive hear,
Which I relate to thee, in language clear.⁷

8.

Which life prolong and vigour, strength, secure,
Keep illness far and thus bring pleasure pure,
Cool, tasteful, nourishing, inviting, good,
Of saintly⁸ men are those the favoured food.

9.

Extremely bitter, sour, saline or hot,
Of pungent taste and rough, intensely fraught
With burning virtues, things that free produce
Disease, affliction, grief, the kingly⁹ use.

10.

Stale, cold and tasteless, what emits a smell
Which on our senses fetid, sickening, tell,
The cooking of a former day, impure,¹⁰
And offals too the beastly¹¹ men allure.

11.

The lawful rites performed by men who are
Removed from thirst of actions' fruits by far,
As duty done, with mind in God resigned,
Are sure the best of rites—of saintly kind.

7. The three kinds of food *viz.*, bright or saintly, forcing or kingly and dark or beastly are described in verses 8, 9, 10 ; the three kinds of rite in 11, 12 and 13 and so on.

8. Men with a bright bent, in whom the bright virtues predominate.

9. Men in whom the forcing virtues predominate.

10. For example food previously tasted by others.

11. Men in whom the dark virtues predominate.

12.

The ritual done some objects to attain
 Or else for show, to please one's spirit vain,¹²
 O best of Bhárats, do thou surely know
 Is one that doth from forcing virtues flow.

13.

Unlawful, void of chants¹³ and gifts of food,
 Without the holy fees to priests that should
 Be paid to meet success, without regard,
 The rite that's done as dark the wise discard.¹⁴

14.

The worship of the gods, of Bráhmans too,
 Of teachers great and men of wisdom true,
 And habits clean and straightness of the mind,
 Restraint unerring and a temper kind,
 Which shrinks from cruelty ; all these are named
 Corporeal penance¹⁵ by the sages famed.

12. To satisfy one's vanity of spirit.

13. The mystic hymns uttered in praise of gods at the time of performing rites. These are the most important part of a rite.

14. The wise men discard such rites as 'dark' *i. e.*, regard them as of no use in securing spiritual advancement.

15. In this stanza the modes of penance which require physical effort or culture are described. Hence 'worship' in line 1 means service involving physical labour. To maintain clean habits of course requires some physical effort. Restraint (sexual) and refraining from cruelty also relate to corporeal activity. Why straightness of the mind should be included in the list, it is difficult to see. Perhaps it has reference to the actual performance of all the physical processes of religious rites without avoiding any of them by less straight, if more convenient interpretation of the texts.

15.

The words which ne'er destroy another's ease,
 Are true and pleasant too and do increase
 The good of men, which flow for study's sake,
 Such words, 'tis known, do verbal penance make.

16.

Mind's peace and straightness, thoughts so deep
and bright,
 Control of self and pureness full of light
 Of e'en the inmost heart, these virtues all
 Man's mental penance, sages wise do call.¹⁶

17.

The three-fold penance, done with due regard,
 By men whose minds desire for fruits discard,
 The men within themselves who find their stay,
 Such penance saintly is—the learned say.

18.

And penance such as is performed with boast
 For honour and reward, with hankering most
 Intense for praise—uncertain, frail withal,
 The men of wisdom, here, do forcing call.

19.

To ruin other men, by self-torment
 That which is darkly done without consent

16. The three kinds of penance, corporeal, verbal and mental, consist in adhering to such acts, words and virtues as are described in stanzas 14, 15 and 16 respectively. We now proceed to analyse the difference between the penances of the three classes of men in which the three kinds of virtue—bright, forcing and dark—respectively predominate.

Of conscience—that is beastly penance called,
The acts of men by darkness deep enthralled.

20.

When aught is given for duty's sake to one
From whom the donor hopes benefit none,
Donation which is made in proper place
And time to proper men, with smiling face,
That gift do all regard as saintly pure,
By which the man who gives doth bliss secure.

21.

In due return to gain a favour good,
In search of fruits and in a selfish mood
The gift that's given with a heavy mind,
The wise regard as of the forcing kind.

22.

All out of place and time the gift bestowed
On one unworthy, in ungraceful mode,
Without respect and care, with gesture cold—
Such gifts do darksome call, the sages old.

23.

'*Om tat sat*,¹⁷ this the three-fold mystic name
Doth God supreme denote, the wise proclaim;
The Bráhmans, rites and veds, the sacred lays,
Were framed by God thus named in ancient days.

17. Of the three names, the first is a mystic symbol formed by the blending of the three letters *a*, *u* and *m*, denoting respectively the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. The second word *tat* means 'that,' 'the unseen one.' The last word *sat* means 'existing' or 'good.' The importance, use and meaning of the three-fold name are described in the following stanzas.

24.

Hence *Om* pronounced begin all ritual's chain,¹⁸
 All gifts and penance too which laws¹⁹ ordain,
 With those that God profess²⁰—the actors pure
 Whose acts on earth are e'er successful sure.

25.

Devoid of thirst for fruits, such persons do
 Unnumbered acts and rites and penance too,
 And gifts bestow, as seek redemption fair,
 Pronouncing only '*sat*' of meaning rare.

26-27.

And '*sat*' the mystic word existence means,
 And goodness, Pártha, also festive scenes,—
 A stay on rites and gifts and penance high,
 Nay acts for God, too, doth the word imply.

28.

The offering burnt and penance done and deed
 Without regard performed, do not succeed,*
 O Pártha, here nor e'en hereafter,²¹ friend,
 But's '*asat*'²² called that doth to evil tend.

END OF BOOK XVII.

18. The mystic monosyllable *Om* must be pronounced at the beginning of every series of acts constituting a religious rite.

19. The sacred books.

20. In the case of actors who are believers in God.

21. In the next world.

22. The opposite of *sat* as explained in stanzas 26-27.

ARGUMENT

OF

BOOK XVIII.

—oo—

Man should not try to renounce action but should do his duty without attachment and desire to enjoy the fruits of his action. Specially, the practice of religious rites, charity and penance should not be given up. All work is the product of five factors—the body, *ahamkār* (the sense of mine and I), the perceptive faculties, motive power and providence. Those who do not know this truth and regard themselves as workers are without true knowledge.

For work to be undertaken it is necessary that there should be (1) a knower, (2) something desirable and (3) the knowledge that that thing is desirable. The work itself is spread over the doer, the instrument and the object worked upon.

Renouncement, knowledge, action, actor, wisdom, patience, happiness are all of three kinds—bright, forcing and dark—according to the virtues which give rise to them. Thus renouncement of work due to ignorance or superstition is dark renouncement; renouncement due to disability or love of ease is forcing renouncement; while renouncement of attachment and fruits of action only, accompanied by the perfor-

mance of duty is bright renouncement ; and so on in other cases.

The legitimate duties and proper virtues of the four castes are then described. One should always do one's legitimate duty. Continuous culture and exercise while doing such duty is the way to secure the bliss of worklessness and communion with God. When that communion is attained the human soul merges itself in the Supreme Spirit and has no duty to do. The Lord is then all in all and delivers His devoted worshipper from all sins and dangers.

Krishna having finished, Ārjun gratefully acknowledges that his doubts and errors have vanished and promises to follow Krishna's directions.

BOOK XVIII.

ON THE COMMUNION OF DELIVERANCE.

And Arjun said "Of Kesi¹ giant the foe,
O Thou of mighty arms, fain would I know,
Hrishikesh² mine, distinctly what the vow
Ascetic is and what renouncement, now."³

2.

The Lord replied "The throwing off of all
Our acts that objects seek, the learned call
Th' ascetic's vow ; forgoing action's fruits,
Renouncement is, say men of wise pursuits.

3.

That actions all should every man renounce
As fault, among the wise do some pronounce ;
While others say that acts for rituals done,
For gifts or penance, man should never shun.

1. Krishna slew the horse demon Kesi by thrusting his left hand into his mouth ; hence addressed thus.

2. A common name of Krishna literally meaning the lord of senses.

3. Arjun wants to know the difference between ascetic's vow and renouncement. It is explained in stanza 2 that ascetic's vow requires forgoing actions but renouncement means performance of acts without attachment and desire for fruits. In stanza 3 it is stated that there are some philosophers who advocate ascetic's vow while there are others who prefer renouncement.

4.

O best of Bhárats,⁴ chief among mankind,
 Opinion Mine of this renouncement, mind ;
 Renouncement e'en of classes three are there,
 Such is the fact all learned men declare.

5.

The acts of rites, of gift, of penance too,
 Men never should forgo but always do ;
 The holy rites and gift and penance pure
 To sanctify the wise are agents sure.

6.

Nay actions these all men on earth shall do,
 Forgoing all results, attachments too ;
 Do thou, O Pártha mine opinion hear,
 That certain is and good and also clear.

7.

Their bounden duty⁵ men should ne'er forsake,
 But by neglect, forgetful, when they make
 Omission such, renouncement is this known •
 Unlawful and from darksome virtues grown.

8.

The man that acts, as source of troubles, shun,
 From fear, corporeal pain, leaves them undone,
 Renouncement forcing makes, unworthy, vain ;
 And true reward of it he doth not gain.

4. The best among the descendants of king Bharat.

5. Refers to the actions known as *nitya-karma* e.g., repeating the daily prayers &c. These a man should do every day. The performance of these is not considered specially meritorious but their omission is a grave sin.

9.

As duty, Arjun, acts performeth who
Without desire, forgetting results too,
Renouncement brightsome his, of nature pure,
Opinion this to thee express I sure.

10.

Of saintly virtue, wise and void of doubt
Such man is not by wishes moved about ;
He shuns no action as of grief the source,
Nor gets attached to that which pleasure pours.

11.

The bodied being can never full forgo
All actions ;⁶ hence who fruits of work does throw
Effective off, the happy man so free,
Renouncer true of acts is said to be.

12.

The good, the evil, mixed, the results three
Of acts in after world inherit free
The men renouncement high ne'er practise who,
But fruits do never touch renouncers true.

13.

O thou of mighty arms, the causes five,
That Sámkhya works conclusive do describe,
Whence flow all actions which on earth we find,
From Me do hear with full devoted mind.

6. Compare Book II, verse 8 and Book III, verse 5.

14-15.

The holder,⁷ actor, what we means do call
 And motive power and Providence o'er all ;
 Whate'er doth man by body, word or mind
 Of acts unjust or just of any kind,
 It flows from causes these—the fruitful five
 Without whose help, no worldly actions thrive.

16.

When such are Nature's laws, himself alone
 Who sees an actor, in unwisdom grown,
 Impure and foul, the man of evil thought,
 The state of things exact beholdeth not.

17.

The man who never thinks that he doth act,
 Who with the world is not mixed up, in fact
 While killing all that lives, he killeth not ;
 In bonds of action he is never caught.

18.

To acts that lead, the processes are three :⁸
 There must be one to know, and he should see
 Something in mind ; and then it should be known
 That through it he can gain his wishes own ;

7. Holder *i. e.*, the body ; actor *i. e.*, the abhikāra or sense of mine and I, *vide* table given in Book VII, note 2 ; means *i. e.*, the eleven organs. The word *Sāṃkhya* used in stanza 13 is held by some commentators to refer to the system of philosophy known by that name ; others hold that it means the *vedānta* system.

8. If we analyse the processes leading to any work we shall find that at the bottom there is one who can know. This is the first element. Then he comes to know something knowable ; this is the second element. And finally there must be the consciousness that if that thing is attained it would go towards the fulfilment of his wishes. The work itself spreads over the worker, the object on which he works and the instrument with which he works.

The act itself in channels three doth run,
Who does, what's done, and that with which 'tis done.

19.

And knowledge, act and actor all again
As virtues three, the Sámkhya books maintain,
Divided into classes three are they ;
To thee I now describe, do listen pray.

20.

The knowledge by the help of which is seen
In things divided, one united e'en
Existence vast that doth not waste nor grow,
As saintly knowledge men undoubted know.

21.

The knowledge which the difference sheweth clear
Of what in various shapes grow far and near
As different beings, such knowledge do thou know,
Is forcing called, which virtues good o'erthrow.

22.

And knowledge that which clings to one crude form,⁹
As all in all through sunshine and through storm,¹⁰
Which knows no truth, is reasonless and mean
Is darksome knowledge¹¹ called by seers keen.

9. Some material object of worship *e. g.*, an image or a block of stone.

10. Which does not improve by the trials and experiences of the world but blindly sticks to its false and crude original form.

11. The reader must have noticed the gradation. Bright knowledge sees unity in the variety of the universe ; forcing knowledge sees variety in variety ; while dark knowledge sees false variety which does not exist in the one crude object of its worship.

23.

The work that is performed by one devoid
Of wish for fruits, attachment all destroyed,
Of which the motives are nor love nor hate,
Is brightsome action pure, the learned state.

24.

And led by thirst for fruits the work again
That people do with self-conceit and pain
Intense that from endeavour great doth rise,
As forcing action vain, declare the wise.

25.

And heedless of the ills which follow thence,
And loss of life and suffering intense
To guiltless souls, of ruin reckless grown,
Acts which delusion does, as dark are known.¹²

26.

Who's free from all attachments, self-conceit,
Whose heart of patience, energy the seat,
Success failure, the man who doth not care,
The saintly actor is of virtues rare.

27.

Attached, desirous too of actions' ends,
Covetous, cruel, all impure who lends
Himself to joy and grief, the people say,
The forcing actor is of proud display.

12. Verses 23-25 describe the three kinds of action.

28.

The man who hath no trace of judgment e'en,
Immodest, cunning, idle, careless, mean,
Insulting and deceitful, also prone
To cheerlessness, delaying still, is known
As darksome actor vile of beastly sight,
Degraded soul that knows no wrong nor right.

29.

Of wisdom and of patience do thou hear,
Divisions three, that I, Dhananjai dear,
To thee detailed in language clear, expose,
As each from virtue each respective grows.

30.

The wisdom that resistance, bent¹⁴ discerns,
And what to do what not,¹⁵ O Pārtha learns,
As also fear and fearlessness¹⁶ and ties
Deliverance¹⁷ too, call saintly¹⁸ wit the wise.

13. Verses 26-28 describe the three kinds of actors.

14. By which man can discern the voice of conscience within himself inclining him to do what is right and making him resist what is wrong. In a man not endowed with 'bright' wisdom the voice of conscience is stifled by ignorance and various kinds of delusion.

15. By which man in this way (see note 14 above) learns what to do and what not to do.

16. By which man knows when to fear and when to be fearless.

17. By which man knows what binds him to rebirth and what leads to his deliverance.

18. For the sake of variety the words 'saintly,' 'worldly' or 'kingly,' and 'beastly,' are used for bright, forcing, and dark respectively.

31.

By which all sins of man and virtues too,
And acts that one should do and should not do,
Appear not what they are,¹⁹ the wisdom vain
As worldly, Pārtha, sages wise maintain.

32.

That sin is brightest virtue what doth find,
The wisdom which in darkness is confined,
Which matters in opposite colours paints,
Is beastly wit, O Pārtha, say the saints.

33.

The patience by which one can well control
The working of the senses, life and mind,²⁰
Which fixed on these doth want no other goal
That patience, friend, is of the saintly kind.

34.

That which howe'er, leads minds of restless frame
To works which virtue, wealth and wishes aim,
Their fruits full well to gain, O Pārtha, hear
Is worldly²¹ patience called by men, My dear.

19. Appear distorted though not in the exactly opposite light as in the case of dark wisdom described in the next stanza.

20. Saintly patience instead of wasting itself on vain pursuits such as wealth, worldly power &c., uses itself in effecting spiritual advancement.

21. Worldly patience spends itself in the practice of works by which religious merit, wealth or other wished for objects can be obtained. The religious merit here spoken of is not of the highest order for the works are done out of a desire to enjoy their fruits.

35.

By help of which one cannot set aside
His dreams and fears, afflictions, griefs and pride,
Such patience, Pârtha, as all fools possess,
Is beastly called, the source of dark distress.

36-37.

Now best of Bhârata, what I say do hear,
Of three-fold bliss the exposition clear ;
The bliss that man enjoys from habit e'en,²²
By help of which the end of woe is seen,
Repulsive what at first as poison²³ drear
But sweet at last as nectar doth appear,
Is saintly blessing called that hath its source²⁴
From peace of mind which spirit's knowledge pours.

38.

With taste ambrosial what at first are fraught,
By senses' contact with their objects brought,
But what at last as deadly poison kill,
Are worldly blessings named by men of skill.²⁵

39.

From sleep and idleness and errors blind
Derived, that first and last deludes the mind

22. Which is enjoyed constantly and as a habit ; opposed to sensual pleasures, which are sudden and transient.

23. At first unpleasant on account of the severe spiritual discipline and training required *e. g.*, in controlling the senses, emotions &c.

24. Saintly or bright happiness can only arise from peace of mind brought about by true spiritual knowledge.

25. In the broad sense of knowledge or discernment.

Of mortal man, the learned sages say
Is beastly bliss that paves the downward way.

40.

No creatures there exist on heaven or earth
Or midst the gods that e'er have taken their birth,
Which are, My friend, devoid of virtues²⁶ these—
Of Nature born, to act that never cease.

41.

For *Bráhmans*, *Kshetris*, *Vysyas*, *Sudras* too
O fire of foes! the work that they should do
Divided are, as virtues theirs prevail²⁷
Of nature born, to work which never fail.

42.

A peaceful mind, control and penance good
And purity, forgiveness, simple mood,
With wisdom, science, faith in Deity sure,
Of nature born, are *Bráhmans'* actions²⁸ pure.

43.

Heroic courage, strength and patient skill,
In war no flight but falling fighting still,

26. All beings are subject to the three-fold virtues which are born of nature and are always active.

27. The works to be done by each caste are laid down according to the virtues—bright, forcing or dark—predominant in each, which again depend on the nature of each caste. The number of castes amongst the modern Hindus is very large, but they can be roughly grouped under the four heads here mentioned. This four-fold division of caste is found in Manu, the most ancient Hindu lawgiver.

28. The virtues enumerated should characterize the action of *Bráhmans*.

Free charity and lordly spirit's grace ;—
These are the virtues of the kingly race.

44.

To tilling of the land and tending kine,
To commerce too the *Vysyas* should incline ;
The other castes to serve with grace and cheer
Should be the patient *Sudra's* lawful sphere.

45.

Engaged in his employment own doth gain
Success divine a man ; do hear again
The way in which such man acquireth sure
The end he seeks—the bliss of knowledge pure.²⁹

46.

From whom all movements spring of creatures here,
The all pervading Soul, to whom adhere
The worlds, adoring Him doth man attain
By actions, sure success—his highest gain.

47.

One's work in proper field with faults replete
Is better far than actions done complete
In others ;³⁰ work to which his nature leads³¹
Makes man avoid the curse of sinful deeds.

29. The words 'success' and 'end' used in stanzas 45 and 46 mean true knowledge which follows *Karma Yoga* or the culture of *Bhakti* as described in Book XII.

30. In fields which are not the proper fields for the worker to act in.

31. Which is in consonance with his nature *i. e.*, which has been laid down in the sacred books as belonging to the particular caste after a consideration of the nature of the men included in it.

48.

O Kunti's son, such acts thou shouldst not shun
 Though full of faults, as through thy nature run ;³²
 For every act on earth some faults do choke
 As burning fire is wrapped in cloudy smoke.³³

49.

To naught attached whose wit, without conceit,
 That man from wishes freed acquires the treat
 Of rare success in worklessness that lies,
 By acts' renouncement full—th' ascetic's prize.³⁴

50.

The way by which the God Supreme is found
 By one that hath with such success³⁵ been crowned,
 The end of wisdom best that seems so clear,
 In brief I say, O Kunti's son, do hear.

32. Which your nature impels you to do.

33. Whatever you do, there are certain stand-points looked at from which your action will appear faulty. Hence a warrior should not shrink from slaying men in battle and think of following the harmless course of life prescribed for Bráhmans. For even the Bráhman's prescribed duties are not perfectly faultless e. g. killing animals in sacrifice is a revolting idea. The proper course would be to do one's prescribed duties with special reference to the virtuous phases thereof.

34. In stanza 45 it was proposed to explain how doing one's duty leads to divine success. In stanzas 46-49 it has been shewn that if a man faithfully, does the duties prescribed for his class in the sacred books, he would by worshipping God gradually get rid of desire and ultimately become a renouncer in the sense explained in stanza 2, Book XVIII.

35. The success which consists in renouncing actions' fruits and the sense of authorship.

51.

Illumed by wisdom pure, by patience' rein
Controlling self entire," by objects vain
Of senses, such as sound, unwrought, the two
Attachment and dislike being stifled too ;

52.

The man who lonely lives and lives on fare
Simple and light, is free from all the care
Of worldliness, hath body, words and mind
In check, to meditation e'er inclined ;

53.

Dovoid of self-conceit and brutal force
And reckless vanity and desires so coarse
And anger, selfishness, not taking gifts ;—
That peaceful soul to state of God-head drifts.

54.

Combined with God the joyful soul divino
Desireth naught nor hath it cause to pine ;
With equal eye it love on all maintains
And thus devotion great to Me attains.

55.

By that devotion deep, from darkness free,
What am I like and what, the soul doth see ;
And then with knowledge this all barriers crossed
He enters Me and in Myself is lost.

56.

Involved in work of every kind he still
Doth claim no fruits³⁷ depending on My will ;
He thus obtains the state, through grace of Mine,
That never knoweth end nor e'en decline.

57.

With all thy heart thy acts to Me resigned,
Towards Myself thy spirit full reclined,
And guided by thy wisdom good, My friend,
Let spirit thine for ever with Me blend.

58.

Thy heart in Me, at pleasure Mine, shalt thou
O'ercome all worldly woes that trouble now
Thy soul through life ; shouldst thou from self-conceit³⁸
Not mind My words, thou wouldst destruction meet.

59.

The thought thou dost conceited entertain—
" I would not fight"—be sure is all in vain ;
For nature, jealous of her laws, shall strive
And thee against thy will to action drive.³⁹

60.

O Kunti's son, the act thou wouldst not do
Through error thine, being helpless quite and true

37. And is hence not bound by them. He does not want heaven or any other reward as the fruit of his action but depending on Me wants Me and gets what he wants.

38. Self-conceit *viz.*, that I am the doer of my actions and being a virtuous man should not kill my friends and relations.

39. You are a Kshatriya or warrior by caste. By nature, there must be the instincts of fighting in your mind and you will not be able to resist the force of nature.

To nature thine innate perform thou must ;
On deeds of previous births, for nature trust.⁴⁰

61.

Within the heart of all doth God reside
And, Arjun, turneth them as toys that ride
On wheeling frames (their bodies), round and round,
But all in dark illusion sunk profound.⁴¹

62.

Do seek protection His in every way,
O Bharat's son ! His pleasure need I say,
Enables man to gain the highest seat
Of rare eternal peace—the sweetest treat.

63.

This wisdom⁴² now to thee have I exposed,
The secret e'en of secrets full disclosed ;
Do thou consider this with care and tact
And just as suits thy wish e'en so do act.

64.

From Me again do hear the highest speech
The greatest secret true that one can teach ;

40. The idea is this. The nature of a man depends on the actions done by him in previous births. You are born with a warrior's nature (see Book XVIII, stanza 43) and though through delusion you may be unwilling to fight at first, your nature will assert itself in the end and you shall have to fight.

41. Men in this life do not see the direct hand of Providence in our doings on account of the spiritual sight being blinded by the action of Maya or illusion.

42. The little known facts about spiritual culture and advancement.

A friend of Mine; devoted as thou art,
Such knowledge for thy good do I impart.

65.

Bear Me in mind, to Me devoted be,
Adorer Mine, do bend thy head to Me ;
Me thou shalt get by action such ; this clear
Assure I thee as thou to Me art dear.

66.

Renouncing duties⁴³ all protection Mine
Alone do seek, to Me thy soul resign ;
From all thy sins I will deliver thee,
So from all anxious thoughts for e'er be free.⁴⁴

67.

To men impious or to those again
Without devotion, those that do disdain
To serve preceptors, this thou shouldst not speak,
Nor e'er to such as faults in Me do seek.

68.

But he who to My true adorers says
This secret best, devotion great displays

43. In the earlier stages of spiritual progress man should not try to give up work. He should do the duties prescribed in the sacred books. And Krishna had all along been urging on Arjun to do his duties as a warrior. But when with the progress of spiritual culture, desire for fruits are got rid of and the mind is well in control, true knowledge dawns on the awaking soul. When this knowledge has fully developed, the human spirit merges in the infinite. At this stage, which is the one contemplated in this stanza, man has no duties.

44. The philosophical part of the work ends here. The rest is a formal conclusion and a link connecting it with the body of the *Mahābhārata*.

Towards Myself and thus he doth secure
Without a doubt e'en My own self⁴⁵ so pure..

69.

Existeth not than him among mankind
A greater doer of acts that please My mind,
Nor there on earth a man can ever be
That will be better liked by Me than he.

70.

And this discourse 'tween us, so holy, who
Will oft peruse, by rites of knowledge true⁴⁶
Shall worship Me⁴⁷ and thus shall blesséd feel,
This sure opinion Mine do I reveal.

71.

The man devoted, from impiety free
Who heareth this, that I have said to thee,
Delivered, he shall get the holy place
Wherein the virtuous live a happy race.

72.

Hast thou, O Pártha ! heard what I have said
With pointed mind, to all attention paid ?
Have errors thine, from want of wisdom grown
Been all destroyed, do thou, Dhananjai, own ?"

45. Secures the highest bliss of divine communion.

46. As opposed to the material rites prescribed for ordinary men.

47. That is the reading of this book with effect, is to worship Me.

78.

And Arjun said "Destroyed are errors mine
Remembrance gained, Achyut,⁴⁸ through favour
Thine;

Confirmed I sit from doubts for ever free,
Resolved to do what Thou hast said to me.

74.

Sanjai :—

'Tween godly Vasu's son of mighty mind
And Pārtha, this discourse of wondrous kind,
That makes one's hair erect, with awe and fear,
I heard myself direct,⁴⁹ O Monarch⁵⁰ dear !

75.

Mysterious most, through Vyasa's favour I
Have heard the yog for which all sages try
From Krishna's self, the Lord of Yog, who spoke
In person thus⁵¹ and doubts of Arjun broke."

76.

O King ! remembering oft, the strange discourse
Of Kesav great and Arjun, pure, the source
Of bliss extreme doth open o'er and o'er
Within my breast and streams of gladness pour.

48. A name of Krishna literally "the unfallen."

49. For a history of the method by which Sanjai heard this dialogue direct see introduction.

50. Dhritarāshtra.

51. In the very terms which are given in the book.

77.

Remembering oft and oft, that image⁵² grand,
Of Hari,⁵³ Lord, that did so awful stand,
Great wonder fills my mind, O King of might,
Again and oft again I feel delight.

78.

Where'er the Lord of Yog doth Krishna rest,
Where'er is Pārtha brave, the bowman best,
E'en there do beauty, conquest, plenty, stay
And certain justice too, my mind I say.⁵⁴

END OF BOOK XVIII.

End of the Bhagavad Gītā.

52. A reference to the subject of Book XI.

53. A name of Krishna, synonymous with God.

54. Sanjai says this with the hope that Dhritarāshtra, if convinced of the invincibility of Krishna and Arjun may yet dissuade Duryodhana and his other sons from fighting against them.

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